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MORE THAN JUST A SCHOOL: MEDICINAL PRACTICES AT THE ABIEL SMITH  
SCHOOL

A Thesis Presented

by

DANIA D. JORDAN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,  
University of Massachusetts Boston,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2021

Historical Archaeology Program

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## ABSTRACT

### MORE THAN JUST A SCHOOL: MEDICINAL PRACTICES AT THE ABIEL SMITH SCHOOL

May 2021

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Directed by Professor Nedra Lee

The Abiel Smith School, located on the North Slope of Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts, is one of the oldest Black schools in the United States in one of the oldest free Black communities. The Abiel Smith School was constructed between 1834 and 1835 as a means to resist racial discrimination in the public school system. The Smith School is central to Beacon Hill's Black history because it helped Black Bostonians advance in society and mitigate against the effects of racism through education. However, the Smith School may have served a dual role in the Black community. Medicinal bottles excavated from the site suggest that the school may have been administering medicine to students. In the nineteenth century, mainstream medicine was closed off to African Americans thus causing African Americans to rely on institutions like churches and almshouses to receive medical care. The bottles found at the Smith School highlight the diverse roles that social institutions played in helping Black Bostonians resist racial discrimination and meet their most basic personal needs.

## DEDICATION

For my great grandmother, Georgia Tucker; grandparents, James and Selina Wynn; and my daughter, Rue Starr Talley.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

American medicinal practices of the nineteenth century have largely been studied by archaeologists at the household level (Cabak et al. 1995:66). This is in part due to medicinal practices in the nineteenth century typically being performed at home (Dujnic 2005:88). As time progressed, however, public health institutions became available to most white citizens but excluded African Americans because of their “social difference enforced according to skin color” (Dujnic 2005:89). As a result, African Americans responded by expanding their institutions such as the church to meet the needs of the Black community.

Scholars have noted the central role churches and schools played in Black communities. The creation of Black churches and schools was due to the poor and segregated treatment that Blacks received in similar white institutions. For instance, Blacks could attend white churches, but they sat in segregated pews and were not able to become members of white congregations (Fitts 1996:61). Blacks also were allowed to attend white schools but frequently bullied and harassed by their white classmates (Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:71). Historians have described the multiple functions that the Black church served as it provided community members with a central gathering place for mobilizing resistance and nurturing spiritual fulfillment (Horton and Horton 1999; Levesque 1994). In addition, historians have

documented the significance of Black schools for providing Black youth with an opportunity to attain education despite segregation (White 1971; Levesque 1994; Horton and Horton 1999). Black schools functioned as a mechanism that protected the educational interest of Black youth and provided them with a literate future (Bell-Beyan 2004:91). Therefore, Black schools were a means of securing freedom because literacy was essential to acquiring a higher ranking in society as well as better employment.

We understand the diversity of purpose in Black churches more extensively than we do Black schools. This is in part due to the minimal attention that archaeologists have given schools and children (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:122; De Cunzo 2006). Previously, archaeologists have regarded schools as having little potential for archaeological research because of the small number of artifacts that could be related to the schoolhouse occupations (Gibb and Beisaw 2000). Archaeologists are now beginning to recognize how archaeological investigations can “illustrate the indelible contributions of community-decision making and community activities in the material record” (Beisaw and Baxter 2017:25). Schools also reflect continuity and change in each community’s ideals and identities, which are manifested through artifact assemblages (Beisaw and Baxter 2017:3).

Addressing issues of health, recreation, and sanitation when studying institutions, such as a schoolhouse, is important because it enhances our understanding of how a site functioned as a vehicle for combatting racism. For instance, a school site can yield information about a community’s attitude and identity as well as cultural mores and beliefs (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:114; Gibb 2004:4). However, a site’s function is not fully

understood until artifacts are analyzed, rather than simply quantified, and archival research is completed to aid in the interpretation of a site. Therefore, if we understand institutions as sites that are reflective of a communal identity, then the Abiel Smith School's physical appearance and condition in the nineteenth century exemplifies how African Americans used their institutions to counter racism and disease.

The Abiel Smith School was constructed on the North Slope of Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts, between 1834 and 1835 and operated as a Black school until 1855. Archaeological investigations at the Abiel Smith School began in 1991. The National Park Service's Northeast Cultural Resource Center conducted excavations in the backlot of the schoolhouse to evaluate the impact of construction for the installation of facilities for handicapped access to the Smith School (Mead 1995: iv, 1). The archaeological investigation was to serve two purposes: (1) to guide planners and architects by identifying significant archaeological resources and expanding existing knowledge of the construction history of the Smith School and its back lot; and (2) to focus on urban land-use and landscape in an institutional setting to identify health, recreation, and sanitation facilities and changes in the ordering of the lot during the nineteenth century (Mead 1995:1; Mead and Pendery 1999:2). Following the 1991 excavation, the Northeast Cultural Resource Center returned in 1995-1997, and based their new research design on the previous archaeological investigation.

The most prominent feature of the Smith School excavation is the privy and drainage system. This privy is believed to have been constructed as early as 1849, during the first renovation of the school house, along with other changes to bring the school up to the

standards of white schools (Mead 1995:3; Pendery and Mead 2006; Baugher 2009:11). It was filled in late nineteenth century before the brick pavement was laid down. The privy provides archaeological evidence of a community's health, recreation activities, and sanitation methodology. The historical record notes that one of the duties of teachers in Boston schools in the 1840s was to keep the yard and outbuildings of schools clean and in good condition (Mead 1995:15; Andrews 1998:23). This would have included the Smith School backlot and privy, yielding traces of material culture that reflect the diverse activities that would have taken place at the school site.

The artifacts recovered from the privy also provide information about the educational activity at Smith School. Artifacts that appear to be directly associated with education are ink bottles, fragmented writing slates and slate pencils, and small lead ink pots with glass liners (Pendery and Mead 1999:21). Among the bottles recovered were a number of whole or nearly whole patent medicine and liquor bottles. Several of these bottles were embossed with letters or symbols which identified the contents or manufacturer. The Smith School contained a high concentration of medicinal bottles identifiable as such. This is uncommon for similar archaeological sites (Bigelow and Nagel 1987; Struchtemeyer 2008; Long 2015).

Concurrently, historical literature does not note that schools served a healthcare role (Horton and Horton 1999; Bell-Beyan 2004). Therefore, this site gives us the opportunity to understand the other roles of institutions in Black communities that have been overlooked by historians and archaeologists. In doing so, this research looks to answer the following questions:

1. What role did the Black school play in treating the health needs of its community members?
2. How did the medicinal practices of African Americans change as institutions assumed a greater role in healthcare?

The medicine bottles recovered from the excavation are of great interest because in the nineteenth century, medicinal practices were largely practiced at home; therefore, these artifacts illustrate how medicinal practices were not limited to the home. They also reflect how African Americans had to expand the function of their institutions because they were excluded from white public health institutions. Additionally, the medicinal artifacts give us the opportunity to understand the relationship between education and health. In the late 1800s, “many social concerns and public health issues focused on the role of schools in promoting and maintaining health,” because it was believed that health and education were synonymous: “knowledge leads to good health, while ignorance leads to poor health and disease” (Allensworth et al. 1995:1). The medicine bottles are a material depiction of the actions the Black community took to preserve the well-being of African American children in the wake of gross disparities. Keeping African American children in good health granted them the opportunity for education, a key component for achieving upward mobility and overcoming oppression and racism. Therefore, this expansion of the function of the Smith School fulfilled the goal of the African American community on Beacon Hill to become respectable free citizens.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Archaeology of School Houses**

Studies of institutions can answer questions about community place making and identity (Beisaw and Baxter 2017:2). Institutions dominated nineteenth century American society, shaping people's daily lives by implementing standards and boundaries on behavior (Gibb 2009; Long et al. 2019: 51). Educational institutions were no different. Material culture at school sites is "shaped by and [reflect] the goals of the institution" as negotiated by the community constructing a shared community identity (Baxter and Beisaw 2017:2; Long et al. 2019:51). During the nineteenth century, communities organized their schools often making important decisions about facets of the physical property such as the landscape, architecture, curriculum, hiring of teachers, and furniture (Rotman 2009:70). These details, according to Gibb and Beisaw (2000:123), illuminate "community attitudes towards public education and larger social issues," including sanitation and public health (see also Long et al. 2019:51). These issues would have been of great concern to the larger community consisting of students, parents, teachers, and school administrators (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:123; Long et al. 2019:52).

However, schools are not static sites. In the nineteenth century, schoolhouses were the most common public building on the landscape, second only to houses of worship, thereby making it the locus for several communal activities (Schoen 1986:3; Gibb and Beisw 2000:107; Connolly and Schablitsky 2003:13). These activities include but are not limited to political meetings and voting, theater, social gatherings, and religious observations. Schools also reflect continuity and change in each community's ideals and identities which are manifested through the artifact assemblage, especially the architectural debris since many schoolhouses were modified over decades of reform (Beisaw and Baxter 2017:3).

Despite the numerous community activities taking place at schoolhouses, schools have received little archaeological attention. Schoolhouse archaeology has primarily focused on two topics: (1) schoolhouse architecture and site formation; and (2) features and artifacts that reflect the use of space and the aspects of communal activities (Connolly and Schablitsky 2003:13). The attempts to address the latter have fallen short of expectations due to the low density of domestic artifacts and the lack of discernable stratigraphy, which have led some researchers to deem school sites as lacking research potential (Gibb and Beisaw 2000; Connolly and Schablitsky 2003:13; Beisaw 2009; Dielissen 2012:20). The small number of artifacts recovered during excavations of these site have resulted in few schoolhouses being recommended for intensive assessment or data recovery (Rotman 2009:72). As a result, there is a dearth of published information on schoolhouse sites (Schoen 1986:44).

In 2000, Gibb and Beisaw examined nineteen technical reports and papers on educational sites that have been archaeologically tested in the northern United States (i.e., Massachusetts, Delaware, Maryland, New York) in order to identify the potential of these sites to answer historical and anthropological questions (Gibb and Beisaw 2000:108). Gibb and Beisaw (2000) found that the lack of a research design and questions specifically related to anthropological themes or processes have affected the informational value and overall archaeological integrity of these sites. The authors found that many of these sites were subject to limited archaeological testing and that archaeologists typically ignored the cultural reasons responsible for the limited number of domestic artifacts on these sites.

Woven throughout these technical reports were several common threads. Gibb and Beisaw (2000:121-1220) found that investigators of school sites primarily focused on the location and footprint of the school and on the artifacts and features that represent the use of the school lot space. While investigators of these sites often found little that could be associated with educational activities (i.e., slate pencils, writing slate fragments, marbles), they did find an overwhelming amount of architectural material (i.e., brick fragments, window glass, nails). As a result, researchers have remanded schoolhouses to the realm of architectural history due to the clear evidence of remodeling and expansions of school buildings (Gibb and Beisaw 2000: 121, 126; Rotman 2009:73). This has obscured the diverse activities that often took place at these sites.

Gibb and Beisaw (2000, 2009), however, encourage archaeologists not to abandon their search for domestic artifacts at school sites. Following Gibb and Beisaw's (2000)

study, archaeologists have begun to increasingly focus their attention on these sites and the potential they have in helping scholars understand the nature of community. Researchers such as Helton (2010), Rotman (2009), and Long et al. (2019) have argued that while few in number, the domestic artifacts at these sites can tell stories of the site's past use as a community center, "not just its history as an educational institution" (Rotman 2009:73).

Rotman (2009:73) argues that domestic objects recovered from school sites are placed there with a degree of deliberateness (see also Long et al. 2019:53). Rotman and other archaeologists have offered various explanations for the low archaeological visibility of school sites. For instance, the spatial arrangement of domestic artifacts on school sites differs from domestic sites because they do not reflect the daily activities associated with the maintenance of a household (Struchtmeyer 2008:29; Rotman 2009:73; Long et al. 2019:53). They also note that the lack of school related items at these sites may be a result of "the lack of specialized material for education in the [nineteenth]-century" because supplies were limited and curricula were "haphazard and lacked standardization" (Helton 2010:119). In addition, students and teachers brought many of the day-to-day material goods to school and subsequently transported them home (Struchtmeyer 2008: 28). Therefore, when the assemblages from school sites are examined, archaeologists "should be cognizant of the kinds of events and circumstances that brought the objects to the site and led to their deposition" (Rotman 2009:73). Archaeologists should also consult historical sources to aid in reconstructing the ways communities used schoolhouses (Catts and Cunningham 1986:57; Agbe-Davies 2001:26; Helton 2010:119).

## **The Archaeology of Black Social Institutions**

The archaeology of African American life has examined schools in addition to churches and meeting houses to highlight the roles that these institutions have played in helping free Blacks fight racism. Black social institutions are central to the continuity, maintenance, and preservation of African/African American cultural identities. Black institutions uphold group ideas on values and enable ideologies of local solidarity (Barton 2009: see also Horton 1993; Horton and Horton 1999; Orser and Funari 2001:62). However, these sites remain under examined. The majority of the data and information we have on African American schools, churches, and meeting houses comes from unpublished technical reports, theses, and dissertations. In general, African American archaeology has largely focused on household level sites on plantations. In African American archaeology, studies of community primarily focus on the yard on the plantation. The yard is a space where communal activities take place. However, in the North plantations were not prevalent, and sites like schools, churches, and meeting houses are integral to understanding the development of community in urban, yet antebellum contexts.

The African Meeting House on Nantucket in Massachusetts was constructed in the 1820s. The meeting house was built to support the growing African American community and to combat racism (Beaudry and Berkland 2007:401). Archaeological investigations conducted in 1993 and 1996 primarily focused on the yard space and the areas in and around the meeting house because the yards at Black sites have been identified as a central place of

African American social and community life (Heath and Bennet 2000; Battle-Baptiste 2004; Beaudry and Berkland 2007:405). Beaudry and Berkland (2007:405) found that “the yard had been meticulously maintained and swept clear of refuse [and] vegetation.” This deliberateness to maintain the yard can be attributed to the multitude of activities such, as children’s plays, picnics or church socials, and crafts and productions organized and held in the yard by the Black community.

The material culture uncovered in these investigations captures the role the African Meeting House played in the Black community as well as the community’s ideals. The lighting fixture fragments “speaks to the adoption of technological advances in indoor lighting” (Beaudry and Berkland 2007:406). Many “small things” were found that convey the use of the African Meeting House as a school. These “small things” include marbles, porcelain doll fragments, gaming pieces, rubber balls, and so on (Beaudry and Berkland 2007:408). Interestingly, domestic artifacts were also uncovered at the meeting house in Nantucket. Domestic objects such as ceramics are important to the study of institutions because they can illustrate the deliberateness of transporting food goods onto the site for social gatherings. Additionally, glass bottles were found at the site – patent medicine bottles, two alcohol bottles, and a perfume bottle. Beaudry and Berkland (2007:408) suggest the low density of alcohol beverages could be due to the Black community adhering to the temperance code and/or they may have been finding other ways to transport alcoholic beverages.

The African Meeting House located on Beacon Hill in Boston, Massachusetts is another archaeological study that is important to our understanding of Black social institutions. The African Meeting House on Beacon Hill built in 1806 was central to the Black community as well as the abolitionist movement, the battle for education, and military integration, functioning as a place of worship, a residence, a school, and a community gathering space (Horton and Horton 1999; Landon and Bulger 2013).

Instead of solely focusing on the architectural details of the building and the community activities that took place at the site, Landon and Dujnic (2007) and Landon and Bulger (2013) strove for a deeper understanding of Black social institutions. Previous studies of African American sites have largely focused on issues of oppression. Landon and Dujnic (2007) and Landon and Bulger (2013) focused specifically on the social activities used by Black Bostonians to build institutions to combat racism, such as fundraisers, picnics, and dinners. They not only attribute the domestic artifacts found at the African Meeting House to community dinners but view the remains of Domingo Williams' catering business as indicative of the role he may have played in organizing these gatherings and his overall position within the social and economic networks of Black Boston (Bower 1978; Landon and Bulger 2013). A key element reflective of the community meals and Domingo Williams' catering business is the glass assemblage found on site (Landon and Bulger 2013). Similar to the Nantucket Meeting House, the presence of alcoholic beverages is relatively small.

Antioch Colony School in Hays County, Texas, and Morganza Elementary in Morganza, Louisiana, slightly differ from the institutions discussed above in that they are

rural Black southern twentieth-century school sites. At Antioch and Morganza, investigators uncovered furnishings. Furnishings are important objects in the study of institutions because they provide insight on the learning environment. The presence of these objects on Black sites further provides an understanding of how African Americans navigated racism where they had unequal access to resources (Scott 2016:113). Black citizens were being taxed for education with much of that money going towards funding white schools, which left Black schools underfunded and operating at a fraction of the budget awarded to Black schools (Scott 2016:32). Despite this disparity Scott's (2016) research on the Antioch School and Struchtmeyer's (2008) research on Morganza Elementary infer the presence of furnishings such as desk fragments that suggest that these Black schools were in line with the educational standards of the time (Scott 2016:117, 134-135). Many of the desks at Morganza Elementary were hand-me-downs from more affluent white schools, which Struchtmeyer (2008:55) suggests explains the variety of desks found at the site. Desks were typically purchased in bulk from manufacturers and delivered to schools, but within the Morganza excavation four different varieties of desks were found, leading Struchtmeyer (2008:55) to assume that the desks were not purchased for the school as a complete set. If they were, they would all be manufactured by the same company. At the Antioch School wire brads were also recovered. Wire brads are "typically used to affix trim or molding to walls or floors and could also be used to hang pictures on walls" (Scott 2016:122). Educational visuals were important to classroom pedagogy (Scott 2016:122). Therefore, their presence at Antioch "suggests that educational materials were likely affixed on the walls of the classroom" (Scott 2016:122).



Furthermore, the artifacts from the Antioch School and Morganza Elementary provides us with insight into technical and industrial education for schoolchildren. Technical and industrial education was popular in the early twentieth century (Scott 2016:124). Activists such as Booker T. Washington argued that “a well-rounded education in industrial, mental, and moral training was necessary for the future of the race” (Scott 2016:124). In her study of the Antioch School, Scott attributes the domestic items such as glass tumblers, tin cans, jar and bottle glass, and a metal lid to a butter churn as pedagogical materials used for hands-on instruction in teaching children how to efficiently complete household chores (2016:123). Morganza Elementary had little in the way of writing utensils - excluding pencils – such as a fountain pen and an ink well. Struchtmeyer (2008:50) suggests the lack of writing utensils could be, in part, due to the lack of student access to material. It is also possible that the nature of industrial art training did not require the traditional pencil-and-paper learning techniques, but rather hands-on activity (Struchtmeyer 2008:50). The industrial arts artifacts include bricks, a metal cast-off, an oil-filter, an automobile tire, spark plugs, an iron C-clamp, a sewing-machine foot/pedal, mason jars, children and adult socks, buttons, and two thimbles (Struchtmeyer 2008:57-60).

This array of artifacts not only reflect the general components of a vocational education, but gendered vocational training as well. Based on artifacts present at Morganza Elementary male school children may have participated in brick masonry, metal work/welding, auto-mechanics, and carpentry. Female students may have been receiving training in sewing, canning and food preparation, and sock darning. The emphasis

on industrial education in the twentieth century was to preserve African Americans livelihood and allow them to compete in the marketplace as well as, ostensibly, “stamp out Black indolence and immorality and foster economic self-reliance” (Struchtmeyer 2008:61).

The previous studies have focused on the use of Black social institutions as places of religion, politics, education, and gathering spaces, but not so much as medical centers. Cabak et al. (1995) offer one study that reflects a Black social institution functioning as a health care center amongst other community service roles, such as a school, a publishing house, and a university for the Black community (Cabak et al. 1995:57). The Wayman A.M.E church excavation in Bloomington, Illinois, in 1992, uncovered a “large portion of medical artifacts suggest[ing] that the church may have provided health care services to the congregation and local community” (Cabak et al. 1995:65). Due to the overwhelming representation of prescription medicines, opposed to patent medicines, researchers suggest medicine was being administered by a physician (Cabak et al 1995:66). Oral histories procured from African Americans in Bloomington detail how the African American community practiced a dual health strategy that involved traditional West African herbal healing practices and formal health care practices. The medicinal artifacts at Wayman A.M.E church reflects how African Americans reacted to medical care inequality and how they responded to illnesses that afflicted Bloomington’s Black community (Cabak et al. 1995:69).

Previous studies have clearly demonstrated the centrality of Black social institutions within Black community life. Black churches, meeting houses, and schools helped Blacks advance in society and negotiate racism. Where Blacks had unequal access to resources, they responded by expanding the mission of their institutions to meet the needs of the community. In researching the fluidity of these institutional roles, scholars can better understand the community ideals and shared identity that helped to shape these institutions. While church and meeting house sites dominate the current discussion around Black social institutions, schools have just as much to teach us. The way a community educates its children can tell us a great deal about not only what that community valued, but what it is unable to acquire through more expected means. The distribution of medicine at the Abiel Smith School suggests that Black Bostonians had limited access to health care centers. As a result, it is possible that the Abiel Smith School was modified to fulfill a health care service to Black Bostonians. This thesis aims to provide a new perspective on Black social institutions, namely schools, as sites of community values and resistance.

## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### **Development of Beacon Hill and its Black Community**

Beacon Hill is one of the most beloved and preserved residential neighborhoods in Boston (Klee 2008:43). However, the appearance of Beacon Hill today looks significantly different from when Boston was first settled by the Puritans in 1630 (Descoteaux 2011:24; Martin 2017:349). Beacon Hill is the sole remnant of the Trimountain, which once rose over the peninsula that is now known as Boston (Whitehill and Kennedy 2000:5). In 1829, the three peaks of the Trimountain were given designations. The eastern peak was designated as Pemberton or Cotton, the central peak as Sentry Hill, and the westernmost peak as Mount Vernon – later known as Mount Whoredom (Whitehill and Kennedy 2000:6-7). The Trimountain remained chiefly a hilly background against the town due to settlers considering it an undesirable place to live because it was distanced from the market place and the shore on the North End (Whitehill and Kennedy 2000:8, 10). Therefore, Trimountain was used as a pastureland for grazing animals until the mid-eighteenth century when the character of the city began to change (Descoteaux 2011:25). Boston was well known for its maritime industry, thus many white wealthy merchants desired to retire to a quieter area of the city since the shoreline was crowded (Whitehill and Kennedy 2000:37; Descoteaux 2011:25). As

a result, the Trimountain region became the most desirable area due to economic opportunities but was located far enough from the bustling wharves to receive the quietness they desired (Domosh 1996:29). Beginning in the 1770s, the peaks of the Trimountain were demolished and a residential district began to develop along the Boston Common (Klee 2008:43; Descoteaux 2011:25). This residential community that developed along the Boston Common is known as the south slope of Beacon Hill, and while this slope may have been flourishing with “several large country houses with sprawling lawns and gardens,” the northern slope of Mount Vernon remained sparsely unsettled because of fears of crime and disorderliness (Whitehill and Kennedy 2000:40; Descoteaux 2011:25). As early as 1733, Mount Vernon began to make a reputation for itself and was dubbed Mount Whoredom because of the “unsavory nature” of the neighborhood’s residents (Whitehill and Kennedy 2000:40; Descoteaux 2011:25). In 1817, Reverend James Davis reported the Mount Vernon tenants as being, “intoxicated and spend[ing] the holy sabbath in frolicking and gambling,” spending whole nights drinking and carousing, “[having] three hundred females wholly devoid of shame and modesty,” and having a “multitude of coloured people” (Whitehill and Kennedy 2000:71).

Although many free Blacks in Boston were initially concentrated in the North End, by the nineteenth century many Blacks began to move out of the North End due to crime and vice (Cromwell 1993:156; Levesque 1994:32; Martin 2017:363). As a result, many Blacks moved to the western side of the North Slope of Beacon Hill (Cromwell 1993:156). The North Slope of Beacon Hill was appealing to African Americans for several reasons. It

provided them an opportunity to get away from the North End's lawlessness, a chance to access jobs and other economic opportunities, and the ability to own property, which was important to northern Blacks during this time (Curry 1981:38; Levesque 1994:32; Moss 2009:168; Descoteaux 2011:26-27). Additionally, many Blacks like their white counterparts wanted to migrate to a quieter neighborhood, especially married Black men to raise families (Descoteaux 2011:26). This movement into the Beacon Hill area provided Blacks with a sense of stability as Black institutions began to arise. The African Meeting House was established in 1805, and the Abiel Smith School was established in 1834. Such institutions "became the focal points for the community's development" and central to the abolition movement and the fight for Black equal rights (Cromwell 1993:156).

### **The Fight for Education: The Establishment of the Abiel Smith School**

The education of Blacks became especially important during this geographical shift because gainful employment demanded "literacy, intellectual development, and acquisition of nonmanual skills that appeared to be obtainable only through an educational process" (Curry 1981:147). For Black Bostonians, education was not only a tool for economic and social advancement, but it helped Black Bostonians negotiate racism through education. It is unclear when the education of African Americans began in Boston, but was perhaps during the seventeenth century when, "legislators obliged all household heads to provide dependents – Blacks and whites, boys and girls, free and enslaved" with access to basic education (Moss 2009:132). However, it is important to note that segregation in Boston schools existed and

occurred de facto but was not enforced de jure. Meaning, Boston did not have a mandatory segregation law, but segregation was commonly practiced. One of the most well recorded fights for equal rights on Beacon Hill took place through the establishment of primary and grammar schools for Black children.

In eighteenth-century Boston, African American children could attend school with white children, but they were faced with many prejudices and distressing treatment in Boston public schools. For example, disciplinary treatment of African American children included sending them to the “nigger seat” (Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:70-71). African American children were also frequently bullied and harassed by their white classmates (Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:71). Denying African American children equal opportunity in the mainstream public school system caused many parents to remove their children from the white schools. As a result, Black Bostonians turned to intraracial solidarity. This turning inward was a defense mechanism against racial prejudices and discrimination, which led, between 1787 and the 1800s, to the establishment of Black social institutions (i.e., meeting houses or schools) that could provide for the multiple needs of community members (Hill 1993:5; Stapp 1993:19).

Prince Hall spearheaded the first private African School in 1787, after the legislature refused to address and act against the discriminatory practices of Boston’s public schools (Hill 1993:6; Moss 2009:136). This school was taught by the Reverend George Marrant, chaplain of the African Lodge of the Masons; however, the school was closed within the year due to the lack of permanent space (Hill 1993:6). Continuing to address their educational

need, Hall and his associates took their complaint of “taxation without education” to the Boston Board of Selectmen (Levesque 1979:115; Hill 1993:7; Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:71). In 1796, the Selectmen reported to the Black community that there was no space or funds available to establish a separate school for African American children, and Black parents were free to establish such a school of their own (Hill 1993:7; Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:71; Moss 2009:136).

In 1798, Primus Hall, Prince Hall’s son, responded to the Boston School Committee by establishing an African School in his house on 63 George Street, now West Cedar Street (Reiss 1997:138). The school was funded by students’ parents and a white Harvard graduate, named Elisha Sylvester, was hired as the school’s master (Hill 1993:7; Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:71). Unfortunately, the school would only be open for three months before suddenly closing due to the outbreak of a yellow fever epidemic (Moss 2009:136). In 1803, white benefactors revived Primus Hall’s African School, but they would only support the education of African American children on the condition that the Black community “provided a room apart for the purpose” (Levesque 1979:116). Thus, the African School moved into a vacant carpenter’s shop until 1808, when the basement floor of the African Meeting House became available to the education of African American children between the ages of seven to fourteen (Levesque 1979:118; Hill 1993:8; Yocum 1998:9; Moss 2009:136). Because the African School was co-funded from within the Black community and from white abolitionists, the school was considered private. In 1812, the city of Boston assumed partial



support of the African School while it still occupied the basement of the African Meeting House and allocated \$200 a year for operating expenses.

It was no earlier than 1818, when the first Primary School Committee for the city of Boston was established and the “African Grammar School” at the African Meeting House was brought under the aegis of the committee (Levesque 1979:118; Moss 2009:137-138). As a result, in July 1820, two years after primary schools were established in Boston, another school, the first Black primary school, was established solely for the education of Black children between the ages of four and seven (Levesque 1979:118). This school was in a room adjacent to the Grammar School on Belknap Street (Joy Street). Shortly after the first opening of the first Black primary school, a second Black primary school opened on Belknap Street (Joy Street). It is unclear when the third Black primary school opened, but scholars have suggested that it may have opened between 1820 and 1821 in the North Square (Levesque 1979:118; Reiss 1997:138). However, it was later removed to Robinson’s Alley in the North End and discontinued after December 31, 1825 (Levesque 1979:118-119). While Black primary schools were being established Barney Smith, Abiel Smith’s brother was also petitioning Boston for a “coloured” high school (Mabee 1968:343; Yocum 1998:9; Moss 2009:138). Unfortunately, no high schools were established due to Boston’s Black population being comparably smaller than the white population. According to an 1830 census, 3.1 % of Boston’s population were Black (Cromwell 1993:156). Additionally, Black children lacked the educational training required to attend high school.

Prince Saunders, the instructor at the African Meeting House, was well acquainted with Abiel Smith, a white Boston merchant whom upon his death in 1815, left \$4,000-5,000 to the city of Boston for the education of colored people (Jacobs 1970:76; Yocum 1998:8; Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:72; Moss 2009:137). The money appointed for the education of colored people allowed the Boston School Committee to assume full support and full control over the African School by 1817 (Levy and Jones 1974: ix; Levesque 1979:116; Mead 1995:8; Yocum 1998:9, 28; Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:72). As a result, the African School became a public school institution and was assigned to an annual sub-committee, in which the pastor of the African Meeting House was to provide quarterly reports of the general state of the African School (Levesque 1979:118; Hill 1993:10). However, despite the financial support for the African Grammar School, the school still faced disparity and inequality in comparison to white schools. On October 11, 1833, it was documented in school records that it was “hot in summer, cold in winter, inconvenient and unhealthy” (Yocum 1998:10; Moss 2009:139). African American socioeconomic status already forced students to frequently miss school because they were working to support themselves and their families (Hill 1993:11). These socioeconomic factors paired with the unacceptable building conditions were of primary importance to the sub-committee because these very conditions – according to them – affected the attendance and tardiness at the school. Additionally, the distance of the school from the children’s home would have also impacted whether a child would have attended school daily or did not attend school at all (Moss 2009:170).

To address the issues in the school record, the Boston school committee requested funds from the city in 1815, for a new building to house the African Grammar School (Rosebrock 1978:18; Yocum 1998:13). However, the construction of the African Grammar School did not go without a fight from some white Bostonians. Whites lobbied the mayor and city council against constructing the Black schoolhouse within the Beacon Hill neighborhood (Moss 2009:139). The white petitioners argued that the presence of the Black school would trigger a downward spiral of decay that would ultimately hinder the revitalization of the neighborhood and cause the respectable members of Beacon Hill to abandon it (Moss 2009:139). In addition, according to Moss (2009:145), it is possible that white petitioners resisted the proposed site for the Black school because the Black school was

higher up on the hill than the existing Belknap Street School. [Therefore,]it is possible that some petitioners associated the school's literal movement up the slope as part of a symbolic effort on the part of the African Americans to elevate their own social standing.

Despite white petitioners' efforts to hinder the construction of the Black school house, the city of Boston purchased a small lot across from the African Meeting House on Belknap Street (Joy Street) from the heirs of Joseph Powers for \$1,935, and the schoolhouse project was completed in 1835 (Levy and Jones 1974: ix; Mead and Pendery 1999:11; Yocum 1998:12, 15). This school, named the Abiel Smith School after its white donor, though brand new, "was manifestly inferior to the white grammar schools" (Hill 1993:17; Moss 2009:137). "The Smith School" was expected to address the multiple needs of its community but was physically much smaller. It was divided into three classrooms: the primary school in the

basement, writing school on the first floor, and grammar school on the second floor. Unlike the “white” primary schools of its time and area, it was the only primary school within the city without a playground, a tree, or even a shrub on its property (Yocum 1998:15-19; Martin 2017:354). It also lacked a library and a recitation room, which was later installed in 1846 (Hill 1993:17). The Smith School also retained poor heating and ventilation systems.

When it became apparent that an intermediate school was needed to accommodate those children who were too old for the primary school (ages seven to fourteen), additional rooms were requested for the Smith School as well (Levesque 1979:119; Yocum 1998:15; Martin 2017:370; Moss 2009:147). The request was granted in 1837, and the arrangement seemingly endured until 1848 (Levesque 1979:119). Conversely, this arrangement was arguably a disservice to Black students because it resulted in “both the oldest and largest students [being] assigned to desks intended for young children” (Hill 1993:20). These and other inadequacies plagued the school almost immediately after construction was finished, causing the Black community to protest the conditions of the school from the start. In 1838, four years after the Smith School was opened, 82-year-old Primus Hall led a protest accusing the school committee of providing false hope (Hill 1993:18). In 1840, William C. Nell, an author and activist who once attended the African School, petitioned for the abolishment of the Smith School. From 1844 to 1852, many Black Bostonians on Beacon Hill protested, boycotted, and petitioned against the Smith School and the broader issue of segregated schooling. In 1855, a bill was passed prohibiting school discrimination (Yocum 1998:32). As

a result, the Smith School operated as an integrated primary school until its closing in 1881 (Mead 1995: iv).

### **Smith School Renovations**

The Smith School was inherently inferior to neighboring white schools, and the inferiority became apparent via boycotts and school committee reports as early as 1838 (Yocum 1998:19; Moss 2009:172). These issues brought to the forefront were due in part to the Board of Education being established a year earlier in 1837. The Board of Education's job was to address issues brought up by reformers, school committees, teachers, and physicians because the "dilapidated and unsanitary schoolhouses with obsolete desks and chairs [started to become a] concern" to them (Henkin and Ignasias 1978:434). Many were beginning to connect inadequate facilities to the sickness, inattention to study, and physical deformities in growing children" (Henkin and Ignasias 1978:434). As a result, the Board of Education began to

collect information [on] the actual condition and efficiency of the Common Schools and other means of popular education; and diffuse, as widely as possible, throughout every part of the Commonwealth, information of the most approved and successful methods of arranging the studies and conducting the education of the young, to the end that all children in this Commonwealth, who depend upon the Common Schools for instruction, may have the best education which those schools can be made to impart. (Mann 1837:384).

As a result, the Smith School was appointed a subcommittee to ascertain what alterations needed to be made, if any (Boston School Committee 1838:93; Yocum 1998:20). Reports were submitted by the subcommittee in 1838, 1845, 1847, and 1848. However, the Smith

School would not undergo renovations until 1849. The renovations of the Smith School included a complete excavation of the backlot and the construction of a brick privy and a complex drainage system for water management (Mead and Pendery 1999:12). The insertion of a complex drainage system provided a way to reduce the crippling effects of epidemic diseases that residents of urban areas most often contracted due to poor sanitary conditions (Melosi 2000:17). Additionally, the schoolrooms were allegedly altered and improved, “possess[ing] every desirable comfort and convenience [and] their furniture, fixtures and apparatus, are all of the most approved description” (City Document No. 42 1849:70; Yocum 1998:22). In their report, Mead and Pendery (1999:4) hypothesized that

the physical improvements to the Smith School, ordered by Boston School Committee, accelerated in the decade prior to 1855 as public sentiment to desegregate Boston School intensified...maintenance of yard space improved in the mid to late 1840s as school integration became an issue.

Their hypotheses can be supported by the historical record that states the Smith School was used as an integrated educational institution to accommodate the overflow of the Phillips School, located on the corner of Pickney and West Centre streets (City Document No. 10 1861:9-10; Yocum 1998:33).

### **Smith School Administration**

Black Bostonians not only faced poorly constructed educational institutions, but also combatted issues with inappropriate conduct with students, exhausted administrators, institutionalized racism, and other situations involving misconduct. In 1833, the Black community petitioned the School Committee that Reverend William Bascom, a white teacher

at the African School from 1824-1834, be removed from the Smith School due to “improper familiarities” with several of the female students at school (Levesque 1979:122; Hill 1993:13). Despite the Black community’s claims against Bascom, and the investigation launched by the School Committee, the charges against him were dismissed because the alleged claims were two years old and the investigation had been “pressed on the testimony of three female students,” who declared, by other witnesses “to be of bad character” (Levesque 1979:122; Hill 1993:13; Horton and Horton 1999:80). These charges, however, “compromised [his] usefulness as a teacher of Black children and the following year the School Committee transferred him to another school” (Levesque 1979:123). Without consulting Black parents, the School Committee hired another white teacher, Abner Forbes, to replace Bascom (Levesque 1979:123). Forbes was well received and commended by the Black community in his earlier years of his tenure (1834-1844) at the Abiel Smith School as he was considered to have taken “deep and lively interest in [the Black community’s] general welfare” (Hill 1993:18). With his own money, Forbes purchased books and a used “apparatus” for the school children. Additionally, the new instructor established adult evening classes at the Smith School and he even made attempts to improve the school (Hill 1993:19; Yocum 1998:19).

However, improving the overall conditions of the school amidst substandard facilities and the general unpreparedness of the students took a toll on Forbes’ morale. This struck renewed concern into many Black parents making it necessary for them to call attention to his “growing neglect of his duties, his harsh punishment of students, and his beliefs of the

intellectual inferiority of African Americans compared to whites” (Battle 1996; Horton and Horton 1999:80). In 1844, the African American community and the white abolitionists associated with the school presented a dossier of charges against Forbes asking for his dismissal and a petition was filed for the abolishment of the Smith School (Amadon 1970:8; Hill 1993:25; Battle 1996; Horton and Horton 1999:80). A hearing was held for Forbes on June 12, 1844, in which the School Committee voted for his gradual dismissal but rejected the abolishment of the school (Amadon 1970:8; Hill 1993:25; Battle 1996).

Outraged by the results of the hearing, John T. Hilton, a Black leader, led a boycott against the school, which dropped the Smith School’s enrollment from 214 students to 127 (Amadon 1970:8; Hill 1993:26; Battle 1996). This reaction from the Black community prompted the School Committee to request that Forbes be transferred to another school within the city (Jacobs 1970:79; Hill 1993:25). It is important to note that Forbes was not the only employee at the Smith school affected or impacted by the protests and boycotts. Miss Woodson, a young Black teacher hired in 1836 at the request of the Black community, and who served under Forbes, was dismissed too. Upon her hiring, Miss Woodson was acknowledged by the School Committee as “qualified in character, capacity, and attainments” (Levesque 1979:123). However, five years later, the School Committee returned and had a different assessment of Woodson’s abilities (Levesque 1979:123). According to the School Committee, Woodson was “not naturally qualified and at no time of her appointment had she given satisfaction in the management and instruction of her school” and was replaced by Miss Symmes, a white teacher (Levesque 1979:123-124). Her dismissal was



essentially a retaliation by the School Committee to the abolitionists' petition submitted in 1840 (Levy and Jones 1974:x; Hill 1993:22, 40; Battle 1996).

Ambrose Wellington replaced Abner Forbes as headmaster in 1845 (Yocum 1998:25). During his tenure at the Smith School, his job was increasingly harder compared to his predecessor. Within his first year, Wellington was faced with an overwhelming drop in attendance and enrollment, test scores, and harsh physical conditions due to the deplorable and dilapidated nature of the school (Hill 1993:35). Much like Forbes, Wellington found his morale diminishing and charged the School Committee with negligence. He took his frustration out on his Black assistant, Chloe A. Lee, blaming her for the school's failure (Hill 1993:37). He eventually requested that she be replaced, and the School Committee authorized him to ask for her resignation, which he did. However, she declined to resign and informed Wellington that "he could tell the committee what was proper" (Hill 1993:38). Despite her unwillingness to resign, the School Committee appeared at the school with her replacement and handed her a letter of recommendation, but Lee still refused to resign (Hill 1993:38). George S. Emerson, the chairman of visiting committee informed her that if she wanted to remain at the Smith School, she would have to submit to a private examination. She rejected the condition and instead marshalled support from past and present School Committee members and Smith school parents (Hill 1993:39). In 1847, the visiting committee decided to reinstate Lee to avoid adding to the calamity of the hostile environment around the Smith School, but Lee had instead enrolled at the state normal school (Hill 1993:39).

After Wellington's removal in 1848 as school master, the Black community petitioned he be replaced with a Black teacher (White 1973:205; Hill 1993:41; Battle 1996; Yocum 1998:26). Thomas Paul Jr., Reverend Thomas Paul's son and graduate of the African School and Smith School, replaced Wellington in 1849 (Battle 1996; Yocum 1998:26). However, Paul's tenure (1849-1855) was met with much controversy; this is in part, due to his accomplice Thomas Paul Smith, Thomas Paul Jr.'s cousin, hoodwinking the Black community. As Ambrose Wellington was being dismissed from the Smith School, Smith started a petition to have Paul placed in charge of the Smith School (Horton and Horton 1999:121). He assured the Black community that the petition would not "affect the question of segregated schools but simply put Paul at the head of the school – if it continued" (Horton and Horton 1999:121). This was, however, not the petition that reached the School Committee with the community members' signatures. The petition that reached the School Committee praised the Smith School, "saying it was offering Blacks the best advantage" (Horton and Horton 1999:121). This petition caused many integrationists to oppose Thomas Paul Jr.'s appointment at the Smith School because his appointment would maintain segregated schooling (Horton and Horton 1999:122; Moss 2009:177). However, Thomas Paul Jr. believed in, "the importance of independent Black schools, controlled and operated by teachers who could identify personally with their students" (Moss 2009:176). It is important to note that Thomas Paul Jr.'s appointment at the Smith School was during the commencement of the Roberts case. Benjamin Roberts was suing the city of Boston for denying his four-year old daughter, Sarah Roberts admission to a school in her neighborhood reserved for white students (Jacobs 1970:82; Battle 1996; Yocum 1998:31; Moss 2009:165).

The Smith School was located over a mile from Sarah's house, and Sarah passed five schools along the way before she reached the Smith School, arguably too far for a four-year old girl to travel (Battle 1996). Thus, many Black community leaders such as William Nell, Benjamin Roberts, and community members were fighting against segregation at this time and "anyone who even expressed neutral feelings in the controversy was an enemy" (Jacobs 1970:82).

Despite the publicity of the Roberts' case, it was not this event that led to the eventual closing of the Smith School. In 1853, Edward Pindall, a fair complexioned young boy was accepted to one of Boston's all-white schools, but upon finding out that the young boy was Black the Boston school committee ruled that the boy be removed from the school and transferred to an all-Negro school (Jacobs 1970:83). A year later, in 1854, the Committee of Public Instruction, formed under the committee of the city council, issued a report on the controversy noting that Boston was the only city in Massachusetts that maintained segregated schools (Jacobs 1970:83). As a result, a bill was passed in 1855 barring school discrimination, which abolished the Smith School as a Black school and caused Thomas Paul Jr. to lose his job (Jacobs 1970:84; Kendrick and Kendrick 2004:236). The Smith School would eventually resume operations as an integrated school until 1881.

### **Use of Smith School after Closing**

The documentation of the use of the Smith School after 1881 is found in a Historic Structure Report published by Barbara Yocum (1998) and in an archaeological report written by Steven Pendery and Leslie Mead (1999). Yocum (1998) reports that the Smith School was

used for different purposes by different organization. There is little information on the Smith School after its closing as a segregated institution. However, Yocum (1998) details that the property was used as overflow for students attending the nearby Phillip School. After that the property was used as a storage building and continued to be used a meeting space for other community organizations.

Based on City Documents, Yocum (1998:33) suggests the Smith School may have been closed briefly from 1855 to 1856. It was recorded as functioning as a Primary School House from 1856 until the latter half of 1859, when it was used as a grammar school by a branch of the Phillips Grammar School located on Southac Street (now Phillips Street) (Yocum 1998:33). The Phillips School was one of the first schools in Boston to have an interracial student body (<https://www.nps.gov/boaf/learn/historyculture/the-phillips-school.htm>). However, it was unable to support all its pupils and construction on a new Phillips School began in 1860 (Yocum 1998:33). During the construction, half of the students were sent to the vestry of the Baptist Church on Charles Street and the other to the Smith School (Yocum, 1998:34). The new Phillips School construction was completed in 1861, and by 1862 all of the the Phillips School's scholars were removed from the Smith School (Yocum 1998:34). The Smith School building was reclaimed as an integrated primary schoolhouse serving Black students from Beacon Hill and white students from the West End until 1881 (Yocum 1998:34).

The report states that Abiel Smith School was converted to a storage building in circa 1882 for the city of Boston (Yocum 1998:35). The school was then recorded in the 1883

Boston Atlas as City Storage Ho, Old Furn'e andc (Yocum 1998:35). In 1887, it was leased to the Post 134 Grand Army of Republic (G.A.R.), an organization for veterans of the Civil War (Yocum 1998:35). The G.A.R. was opened to all honorably discharged "colored" soldiers and sailors who served in the military between April 12, 1861 to April 9, 1865 (Yocum 1998:36-37). The men from this post met regularly on Thursday until the 1940s, when most members had passed away, and meetings became less frequent (Yocum 1998:37). The building was then occupied by another veteran organization – James E. Welch Post Number 56 of the American Legion (Yocum 1998:36). This organization was originally founded in 1919 for veterans of World War I. Later, they began to include veterans from War World II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War (Yocum 1998:36-37). Allegedly, the American Legion post took over the Smith building in 1941, but it is possible that the American Legion post may have occupied the building as early as 1920, when the state legislature directed cities and towns to provide quarters or funds for quarters to all the American Legion post in the state (Yocum 1998:37). By 1982, the American Legion was sharing the Smith School building with another veteran group – John F. Kennedy Chapter 44 of Disabled American Veterans (Yocum 1998:37).

After its renovation in 1975, the National Park Service established an office on the second floor of the Smith School for the Boston African American National Historic Site (BOAF) employees. The United Service Organization (U.S.O.) occupied the first floor of the Smith School building until 1987 when they moved to a new location (Yocum 1998:41). When the U.S.O. vacated the building in 1987, the National Park Service signed an

agreement with the city of Boston on March 9, 1987, to occupy the Smith School in exchange for maintaining both the interior and exterior of the building, as well as managing the building utilities (Yocum 1998:41). It is unclear exactly when the Museum of African American History (MAAH) administrative office moved into the first story of the building, but it was sometime shortly after the National Park Service signed the agreement with the city of Boston (Yocum 1998:41). Today, the Smith School building is used as a museum that houses annual exhibits on an array of African American historic topics.

## CHAPTER 4

### ARCHAEOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

#### **Abiel Smith Archaeological Project**

The Abiel Smith School at 46 Joy Street, Boston, Massachusetts currently serves as the Museum of African American History (MAAH). In the 1990s, the National Park Service, in conjunction with MAAH, conducted three seasons of archaeological fieldwork covering a span of four years (Mead 1995; Pendery and Mead 1999). Archaeological excavations at the Smith School focused on a privy and complex drainage system first uncovered in 1991. Early archaeological interpretations of the site focused on issues of health, recreation, and sanitation because of the potential information that the privy and drainage system could reveal about the environmental conditions and health of the Black community on Beacon Hill (Landon et al. 2005:13). While the previous work at the Abiel Smith School primarily focused on architectural items unearthed at the site, excavations also yielded a large glass assemblage that could shed light on the specific medicinal practices employed by teachers at the Smith School to improve the physical and learning conditions of youth living on Beacon Hill and attending the school.

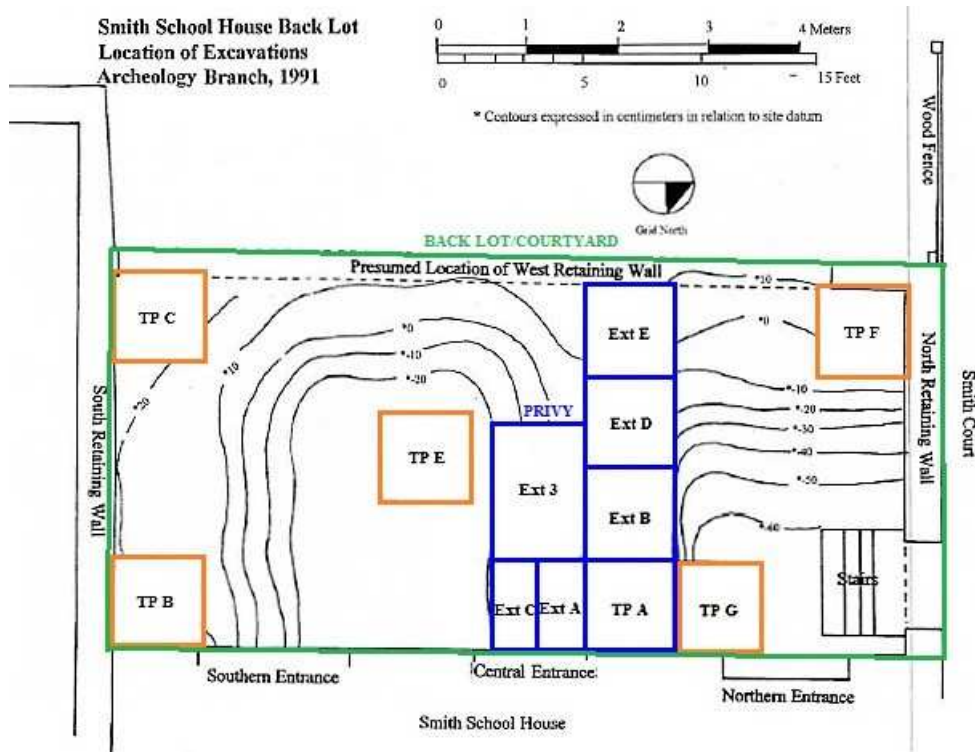
## **Summary of Previous Excavations at the Smith School**

Archaeological excavations took place at the Abiel Smith School in 1991 and then from 1995 to 1997. The fieldwork was done in conjunction with planned construction at the Museum of African American History aimed at “adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of the Smith School and [the] installation of handicap access and drainage in the backlot of the African Meeting House” (Pendery and Mead 1999:1). The 1991 excavations were a Phase 1 survey that was done to identify the extent and integrity of the archaeological deposits at the Abiel Smith School. These preliminary investigations revealed a complex site history that was either directly connected to or affected by significant architectural changes at the nearby African Meeting House (Mead 1995:iv; Pendery and Mead 1991:1). For example, the 1991 excavations focused on the backlot of the Smith School, and it exposed three brick and slate drain systems similar in style and construction to similar drainage features recorded at the African Meeting House in 1985 (Bower and Crosby 1985:2; Mead 1995:3). The drains exposed on the backlot of the Smith School were found under a brick pavement constructed in 1885 (Mead 1995:3). A brick lined privy was also found during this Phase 1 survey. Based on the lamp chimney glass and bottle glass uncovered, archaeologists dated this privy to 1849 and believed that it was built during an early series of renovations (Mead 1995:3). These renovations were completed to improve the sanitation and ventilation of the Smith School (Yocum 1998:20). The identification of similar drainage systems at the African Meeting House led archaeologists to conclude that the school and meeting house “shared



environmental and social history” that necessitated further examination of the institutions’ shared use of space (Landon 2005:13).

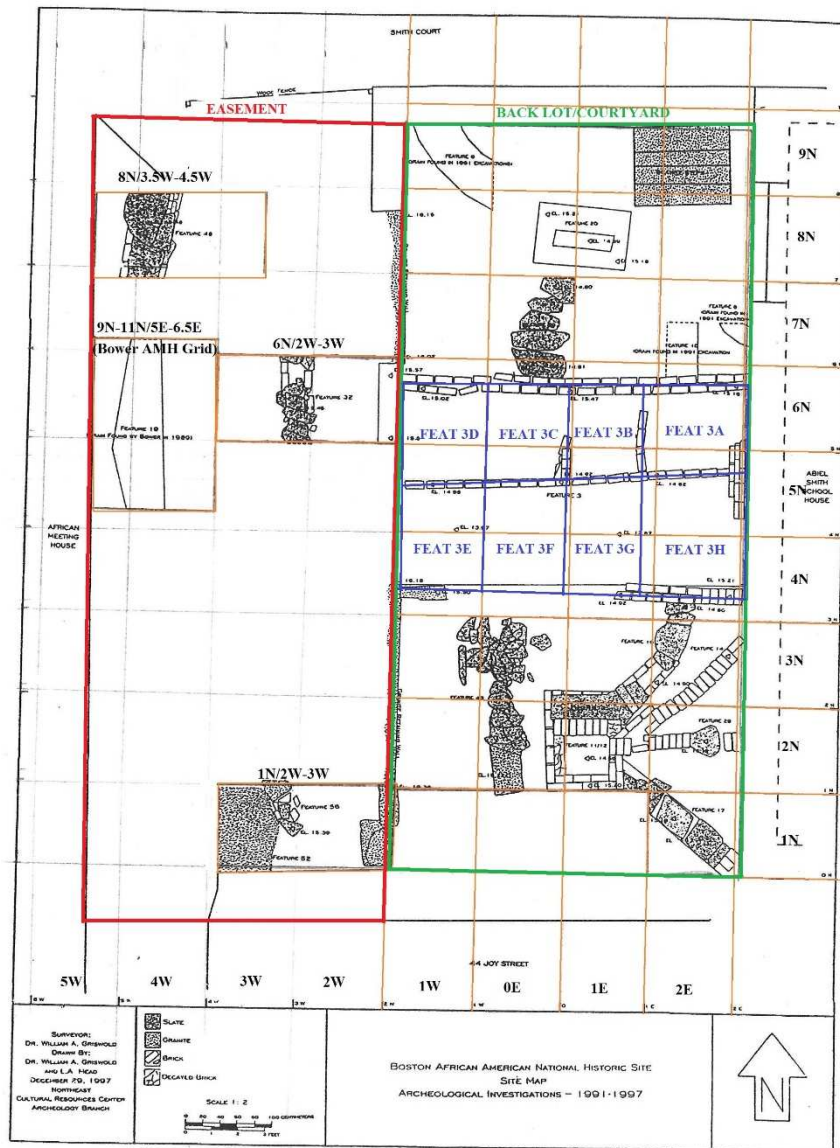
**Figure 1.** 1991 Smith School Backlot excavation units



The 1995-1997 excavations included data recovery efforts of the eleven excavation units and archaeological features identified at the Abiel Smith School in 1991(Figure 1). Data recovery efforts within the Smith School Courtyard identified a builder’s trench as well as an elaborate drainage system (Mead 1999:2-3) (Figure 2). The builder’s trench was dated to 1850; however, fill under the 1885 brick pavement as well as artifact rich deposits associated with the construction and use of the privy and drainage system spanned from 1849 to 1880 (Pendery and Mead 1999:2-3). Additional units were also placed in the easement and

alleyway between the Abiel Smith School and African Meeting House (Pendery and Mead 1999:i, 24; Landon 2005:14) (Figure 2). Situated between these two institutions, these areas were heavily used and trafficked by the African American members of the Beacon Hill community. However, archaeologists also uncovered a complex array of features related to the construction of the drainage system and other major physical renovations made to both the Abiel Smith School and the African Meeting House area (Pendery and Mead 1999). Excavations of the easement between the Smith School and African Meeting House identified the original ground surface of the site as well as a brick drain, repair trench for the African Meeting House, and possible well. While the ground surface was dated to 1830 using ceramics and bottle glass, the brick drain was part of an 1850 drainage system renovation of the backlot of the African Meeting House (Pendery and Mead 1999:24). The repair trench and well were also dated to approximately 1850 (Bower 1990:92; Pendery and Mead 1999). The repair trench and possible well are located in the easement between the Smith School and the African Meeting House as well as a builder's trench that was associated with the construction of a wall in the Smith School courtyard.

**Figure 2.** 1995-1997 Smith School Backlot and African Meeting House Easement Excavation units and Features



This study builds upon the previous investigations of health and sanitation at the Abiel Smith School by examining the site's glass assemblage. The previous investigations of the site found that the privy and drain features underneath the brick pavement are consistent with the 1849 renovations of the Smith School, which led to further construction of drains in

the easement between the Smith School and African Meeting House in 1850 to combat the persistent drainage problems at this site. (Pendery and Mead 1999:26-27). However, in the report detailing the results of the excavations conducted from 1995-1997, archaeologist Steve Pendery reported 13 intact medicinal bottles (Pendery 1999). These bottles suggest that Black social institutions may have played an active role in providing healthcare to the community on Beacon Hill.

## **Methods**

This study analyzes archaeological contexts associated with the operation of the Smith School. During preliminary research based on Pendery and Mead's (1999) report, excavation units 2N/1W and 3N/1W, and features 3, 20, 36, 41, 43, 49, 54, and 55 were identified as directly associated with the Smith School's circa 1849 to 1880 occupation. These excavation units and features were documented as representing the intersections of three features: (1) the builder's trench for the western wall of the courtyard; (2) a stone wall feature; and (3) the builder's trench associated with the privy (Pendery and Mead 1999: 19, 24). However, using deposit descriptions, profile drawings, and field notes, additional deposits from the easement between the African Meeting House and Smith School Courtyard were also included in the analysis (Table 1 and 2).

**Table 1.** Easement between African Meeting House and Smith School Courtyard contexts.

<b>Easement between African Meeting House and Smith School Courtyard</b>			
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Stratum/ Level/Feature</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>6N/2W</b>	Stratum 3, Level 1	Fill	c. 1850
<b>6N/2-3W</b>	Stratum 2, Level 3	Fill	c. 1850
<b>8N/3.5W-4.5W</b>	Stratum 3	Fill	c. 1850
<b>9-11N/5-6.5 E</b>	Stratum 4, Level 1 Stratum 4, Level 3	Fill	c. 1850
<b>8N/3.5-4.5W</b>	Feature 45	Repair Trench for African Meeting House	c. 1850
<b>6N/2-3W</b>	Stratum 4, Level 1 Stratum 4, Level 2	Ground Surface	c. 1830
<b>8N/3.5-4.5W</b>	Stratum 6	Ground Surface	c. 1830
<b>6N/2-13W</b>	Stratum 5, Level 1 Feature 23	Brick Drain	c. 1850
<b>1N/2-3W</b>	Feature 50 Feature 52 Feature 56 Feature 57	Possible Well	c. 1850

**Table 2.** Smith School Courtyard Context

<b>Smith School Courtyard</b>			
<b>Unit</b>	<b>Stratum/ Level/Feature</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>1N/2-3W</b>	Feature 55	Builder's Trench for Courtyard Wall	c. 1850
<b>2N/1W</b>	Stratum 3, Level 1	Builder's Trench for Courtyard Wall	c. 1850
<b>3N/1W</b>	Stratum 3 Feature 36	Builder's Trench for Courtyard Wall	c. 1850
<b>6N/2-3W</b>	Feature 26, Level 1	Builder's Trench for Courtyard Wall	c. 1850
<b>1N/2E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>2N/1E</b>	Stratum B1 Feature 12, Stratum 1, Level 1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>3N/0E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>3N/1W</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>3N/2E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/0E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/1E</b>	Stratum B1 Feature 3, Level 1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/1W</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/2E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>5N/0E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>5N/1E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>5N/1W</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>5N/2E</b>	Stratum B1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>7N/0E</b>	Stratum B1 Stratum 1 Stratum 2 Stratum 2, Level 2	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880

	Stratum 2, Level 3		
<b>8N/0E</b>	Stratum 1, Level 1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>8N/1E</b>	Stratum B1, Level 1	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>8N/0-1E</b>	Stratum 2, Level 1 Feature 25	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
	Test Pit A, Level B	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
	Test Pit A + Extension B, Level B	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
	Test Pit E, Level B	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
	Test Pit F, Level BI Test Pit F, Level BII Test Pit F, Level BIII	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
	Test Pit G, Level B Test Pit G, Level BI Test Pit G, BIV	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
	Feature 3, Level BI	Fill underneath Brick Pavement	c. 1849-1880
<b>3N/1E</b>	Feature 13 Feature 41	Drainage System	c. 1849-1880
<b>8N/0-1E</b>	Feature 20, Stratum 2, Level 1 Feature 20A, Stratum 2, Level 2 Feature 25	Drainage System	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/0E</b>	Feature 3, Stratum 1	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/1E</b>	Feature 3, Stratum 1 Feature 3G, Stratum 1, Level 2 Feature 3G, Stratum 2, Level 2 Feature 3G, Stratum 2, Level 3	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/1W</b>	Feature 3E, Stratum 1, Level 1	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>4N/2E</b>	Feature 3H, Stratum 2, Level 1	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>4-5N/1W</b>	Feature 3E, Stratum 2, Level 1 Feature 3E, Stratum 2, Level 2	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>4-5N/2E</b>	Feature 3H, Stratum 1, Level 2	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>5N-1W</b>	Feature 3, Stratum 1, Level 1	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>5-6N/0E</b>	Stratum 2B, Level 1	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>5-6N/0-1E</b>	Feature 3B, Stratum 1, Level 1 Feature 3B, Stratum 1, Level 2 Feature 3B, Stratum 1, Level 3 Feature 3B, Stratum 2, Level 1 Feature 3B, Stratum 2, Level 2	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880

Feature 3B, Stratum 2A			
<b>5-6N/1-2E</b>	Feature 3A, Stratum 3	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>6N/0E</b>	Feature 3C, Stratum 1, Level 1	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
<b>6N/2E</b>	Sump Pit	Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
Test Pit A + Extension, Level BIII		Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
Test Pit A + Extension, Level BIV			
Feature 3A, Level BIII		Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880
Feature 3A, Auger			
Feature 3B, Auger		Privy Deposit	c. 1849-1880

### **Minimal Number Vessel (MNV) Count Methods and Criteria**

After identifying the contexts associated with the Smith School occupation, a minimal number vessel (MNV) count was conducted on the glass artifacts from the study assemblage (Table 1 and 2). An MNV is “the minimum number of the original items that can account for the fragmentary specimens present in the archaeological assemblage” (Voss and Allen 2010:1). Although Voss and Allen’s (2010) article was written specifically for determining the MNV for ceramics, MNVs are standard for determining the nature of any assemblage. To subjectively assess and group shards that likely represented a single vessel, qualitative methods and criteria for vessel form developed by Voss and Allen (2010) were applied. The qualitative approach also counts each individual body shard as single vessels if they are not identical to other body shards in the deposit assemblage in color, thickness, and texture. Qualitative methods can be more subjective and less replicable than their quantitative counterparts. To compensate for the subjectivity of this method, MNV groupings must be clearly recorded for future investigations to be able to reevaluate the same groupings (Voss and Allen 2010:1; Horlacher 2016:72-73).



Before the MNV could be employed, the meaningful attributes for determining groupings had to be identified. The glass artifacts were subdivided by manufacturing technique (i.e., freeblown, contact, or machine made), embossing, maker's mark, color (i.e., colorless, aqua, amber, cobalt, green), and vessel form (i.e., lip, finish, neck, shoulder, body, base, intact). After subdividing the glass, a criterion was developed to count vessels. As the study assemblage was pulled from several locations across the site, to avoid overcounting, MNVs were calculated by placing contexts in the same area together instead of calculating contexts separately. For instance, MNVs from all contexts within the Smith School Courtyard were calculated together. This assured that vessels were not being counted twice and allowed for the cross mending of artifacts found in different contexts but grouped together in the same area.

In this study a rim diameter sheet was used as a measurement tool to determine the minimum diameter that must be present to count a glass shard as a vessel. Anything less than an inch was not counted. For each context if a full base was present it was considered a vessel. Any base that was one inch or more was also counted as a vessel if the manufacturing technique, maker's mark, decoration, and color differed from other bases in the contexts being examined or if it did not crossmend.

For each context, full lips and finishes/rimms were considered a full vessel. Any lips and finishes/rimms that were one inch or more were considered a vessel if manufacturing technique, lip and finishes/rimms types, and color differed from other lips and finishes/rimms in the contexts being examined together and did not crossmend. Lips and finishes/rimms were

also compared against the bases for each context to avoid counting a vessel twice. Therefore, if the lips and finishes/rims shared similar attributes to one-inch bases within the contexts, the bases were excluded from vesselization. The lips and finishes/rims would represent the single vessel. Likewise, if bases shared similar attributes to the lips and finishes/rims that were identified within the contexts, the base was counted as a single vessel if it measured one inch or more and the lips and finishes/rims were excluded from vesselization. The base would represent the single vessel. Body shards were not vesselized unless they had an attribute that was the only one of its kind in the context. Then it was considered a vessel. Necks were also not vesselized, especially if lips and finishes/rims were present in the context to avoid counting a vessel twice. Although if the neck had an attribute that was the only one of its kind in the contexts it was counted as a vessel.

The total glass vessels at the Smith School Courtyard and the Easement between the African Meeting House and Smith School is 242. Out of the 242 vessels, 42 vessels were categorized as kitchen/household object types such as tumblers, wine glasses, goblets, lamp globes, cups, and decorative glass objects. These were excluded from the analysis because the study assemblage specifically focused on wholesale bottles that contained liquids. Therefore, a final total of 200 vessels were used in the analysis.

## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS

Many artifact types can be analyzed to understand the events that took place at a school such as architectural remains, ceramics, glass, and personal objects such as toys. The variety of artifact types present at school sites reflects the multi-faceted nature of a schoolhouse. This chapter presents the results of the glass assemblage recovered at the Abiel Smith School, aiming to understand the activities at the school site, especially regarding health practices of the African American community on Beacon Hill.

#### **Glass Assemblage Characterization**

As shown in Table 3, glass vessels are placed in functional categories: beverages, education, toiletries, health/medicine, food, and unidentified. MNVs and percentage of total vessel assemblage are calculated for each category. When considering the vessel glass distribution pattern based on functional category, beverages (n=63) and health/medicine (n=60) have a greater presence, compared to food-related (n=4), toiletries (n=5), and educational (n=15) vessels.

**Table 3.** Smith School Glass Vessel Counts by Function.

<b>OBJECT FUNCTION</b>	<b>MNV</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
BEVERAGES	63	31.5%
EDUCATION	15	7.5%
TOILETRIES	5	2.5%
HEALTH/MEDICINE	60	30%
FOOD	4	2%
UNIDENTIFIED	53	26.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Overall, beverages were the most represented, accounting for 31.5% of the total assemblage. Health/Medicine was the second most at 30%. The least represented class was food at 2%. A function could not be assigned to 26.5% of the glass vessels because these vessels could not be specifically identified.

Table 4 divides the beverage class of glass bottles into more nuanced categories, specifically into alcoholic and non-alcoholic categories. More beverage bottles were alcoholic than not.

**Table 4.** Frequency of Beverage artifacts at the Abiel Smith School.

<b>OBJECT TYPE</b>		
<b>ALCOHOLIC</b>	<b>MNV</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
LIQUOR	23	36.5%
WINE	16	25.4%
BEER	7	11.1%
CHAMPAGNE	3	4.8%
<b>NON-ALCOHOLIC</b>		
SODA	12	19.0%
MILK	2	3.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Alcohol, such as liquor (n=23), wine (n=16), beer (n=7), and champagne (n=3) were the most common beverage in the assemblage. At least six of the liquor bottles were embossed with language such as, “USE OF THIS,” “Warranted/Flask,” “Registered/ Full ½ Pint,” “SALE/OF,” “BOT.” Three embossed liquor bottles had more detailed embossing (e.g., providing addresses and location for manufacturing). One bottle read: “LY WINE/ STORE/ JOS. CLEVE/ 9 and 11 CAMBRIDGE ST. BOSTON;” another read: “BOSTON/EGISTERED” - “E;” and yet another read: “REX/COR. S.” One of the wine basal shards was embossed with “CB.” It is possible that “CB” stands for Thomas Clevenger, Clayton, NJ glass works (1916-1930) or Clevenger Bros. Glassworks, Clayton, NJ (1930)

(Toulouse 1971:114). Three wine bottles represented in the assemblage had kick-ups. Six of the beer bottles are amber in color. Out of these six amber beer bottles, three have stippling and two are embossed. One beer bottle reads: "SIT." While the other reads, "BIDS SAL"-/" SALE." The remaining two beer bottles are yellow and green.

The remaining beverages are non-alcoholic beverages such as soda (n=12) and milk (n=2). Seven of the twelve soda bottles were green, three were colorless, and the remaining were colorless with a green or aqua tint. Seven of the soda bottles also had stippling. One of the bottles with stippling also has embossing. The green body shard with stippling read:

"NOT RETURN A/TO BE REFI." One of the soda bottle colorless body shard read: "La."

The one colorless, aqua tint soda bottle also had embossing on it. It read:

"Registered/Crescent Star Beverage Co:SS/Boston, MA/ 8 oz." (1920s) (G.D. Hall Company 1922:243). Out of the two milk bottles recorded in the beverage assemblage, only one of the vessels had embossing, which read: "One Quart," "Hood/MFG CO./192..." (ca. late 1800s-1900s) (Sampson and Murdock Company 1887:1454).

**Table 5.** Frequency of Education artifacts at the Abiel Smith School

<b>OBJECT TYPE</b>		
<b>EDUCATIONAL</b>	<b>MNV</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
INK WELL	9	60.0%
INK BOTTLE	6	40.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	15	100.0%

Table 5 summarizes the glass artifacts categorized as educational. Educational items, such as ink bottles (n=9) and ink wells (n=6), compromise 7.5% of the glass vessel assemblage (Table 1). Five of the six ink bottles are complete. The remaining ink bottle is represented by a lip fragment. One intact ink bottle is embossed with: “Caws Ink New York” (1860s-1910s) ([www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm](http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm)). Similarly, six of the nine ink wells are intact with the remaining ink wells represented by lip, body, and basal shards. One intact ink well is embossed as well. The ink well reads: “J.M. and S” (1858-1930s) ([www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm](http://www.sha.org/bottle/index.htm)).

**Figure 3.** “J.M. and S” inkwell (left). “Caw’s Ink New York” inkwell (right). Photo courtesy of Norm Eggert.



**Table 6.** Frequency of Toiletries artifacts at the Abiel Smith School.

OBJECT TYPE		
TOILETRIES	MNV	PERCENTAGE
PERFUME/COLOGNE	4	80.0%
HAIR TONIC	1	20.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 6 shows the various types of toiletry glass artifacts. Toiletries such as perfume and cologne (n=4) and hair tonics (n=1) make up 2.5% of the glass assemblage (Table 1). Two out of the four perfume/cologne bottles were embossed: (1) “J.M. Farina/Cologne,” (1841) (Harris 2010) and (2) "Lubin/ Perfumeur/ A Paris" (1865-1890) (Runyon et al. 2009).



**Figure 4.** “J.M. Farina/Cologne”. Photo courtesy of Norm Eggert.



**Figure 5.** Perfume/Cologne bottle with glass stopper and ground shank. Photo courtesy of Norm Eggert.



The third perfume/cologne bottle was unlabeled, but it has a round glass stopper in it with a ground shank. The fourth perfume/cologne is represented by a sprinkler top finish, which is known to be a familiar finish on cologne bottles. Last, the hair tonic is also an unlabeled bottle, but due to its size and stature it fits the criteria as: colorless, thin bodied, prescription lip, rectangular cross-body, and small in size.

**Table 7.** Frequency of Health/Medicine artifacts at the Abiel Smith School.

<b>OBJECT TYPE</b>		
<b>HEALTH/MEDICINE</b>	<b>MNV</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>DRUGGIST/PRESCRIPTION</b>	23	38.3%
<b>PATENT/PROPRIETARY</b>	23	38.3%
<b>INDETERMINATE</b>	14	23.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	60	100.0%

Table 7 shows the frequency of Health/Medicine artifacts at the Abiel Smith School. The health/medicine bottles represent 30% (n=60) of the glass vessel assemblage (Table 1). The medicinal bottles are evenly split between Druggist/Prescription (n=23) and Patent/Proprietary (n=23). The remaining medicinal bottles (n=14) are indeterminate. These are bottles that have diagnostic features of medicinal bottles but cannot be distinguished between Druggist/Prescription or Patent/Proprietary. There are eleven complete Druggist/Prescription bottles in the health/medicinal vessel assemblage. At least three of these bottles bears the imprint of local distributors: (1) “Boston/ Leavitt” (1846-1860); (2) “Genuine/ J Russell Spalding/ Boston, Mass” (1850s; Adams 1852:43); and (3) “Boston/

Preston & Merrill” (1845-ca. 1906) (Fike 1987:178). Three bottles have identifiable maker’s marks. One reads “S B W CO” and can be traced to Saltsburg Bottle Works CA. 1890 (Toulouse 1971). The second: “C. G. W,” is possibly from the Campbell Glass Works, in West Berkeley, California (1884-1885) (Toulouse 1971). Although, the third bottle with the maker’s mark: “A.G.S & CO.” is identifiable, it is unable to be traced to a manufacture. Additionally, one bottle is embossed with the numbers “-161.” This imprint can either be a manufacturing number, an unknown manufacturing number, or currently a unidentified maker’s mark like the latter bottle.

**Figure 6.** “Genuine/J Russell Spalding/Boston, Mass.” Medicine bottle.  
Photo courtesy of Norm Eggert.



The collection also has two Druggist packing bottles, two unlabeled prescription bottles with sponges in them, and two vials. Last, one body shard is embossed: “BY EXAM/ 2 CHU”-/ “B.” There are seven intact and embossed Patent/Proprietary bottles, four of which

are distinguishable as children's medicines. There are three "Dr. McMunn's Elixir of Opium" (1842-1900) (Snyder 1905) and one "MRS. WINSLOW'S/ SOOTHING SYRUP/ PROPIETOR'S/ CURTIS and PERKINS" (mid 1840s-1930s) (Fike 1987). There is one "Perry Davis' Vegetable Pain Killer" (1840) (Petty 2019), and two Drake's 1860 Plantation Bitters Bottle (Fike 1987:33), along with two plain unlabeled intact Patent/Proprietary bottles. In the indeterminate health/medicinal is an Eagle/Cornucopia or "Pitkin" flask.

**Figure 7.** "MRS. WINSLOW'S/ SOOTHING SYRUP/ PROPIETOR'S/ CURTIS and PERKINS" medicine bottle. Photo courtesy of Norm Eggert.



**Figure 8.** Druggist packing bottles with sponges. Photo courtesy of Norm Eggert.



Food related items had the lowest presence in the glass vessel assemblage, making up only 2% of the entire glass bottle assemblage (Table 1). All four bottles are condiment/sauce containers, three of which are unlabeled. One is embossed with “J 3 D/S” and was identified as Lea and Perrins (Worcestershire) Sauce Bottle (1877-1902) (Toulouse 1971:277).



**Figure 9.** Condiment bottle. Photo courtesy of Norm Eggert.



Among the glass artifacts, beverage bottles were the most common with bottles having maker's marks ranging from Boston to New Jersey and dating from the nineteenth century. Health/medicine bottles make up the next largest group, evenly distributed between druggist/prescription bottles and patent/proprietary bottles. Many of the druggist/prescription bottles come from local business operations. Additionally, several of the Health/Medicine bottles exist as complete vessels. Education-related items are the third most common artifact in the glass assemblage, with ink wells the most prevalent. The toiletries, although few, appear to be *high-end* personal items. Lastly, the food vessels are nineteenth-century

condiment/sauce bottles, one of which is representing one of the oldest sauces imported and used by United States citizens.

### **Comparable Site Data**

To contextualize the data, the Abiel Smith School glass vessel assemblage is compared to two African American schools and one African Meeting House. These three sites are ideal for comparison because they are nineteenth- and twentieth- century Black schools and provide archaeological evidence for Black education and community. Out of the fifteen schoolhouse publications available, only these three schoolhouses had vesselized glass assemblages. The African Meeting House built in 1806 in Boston, Massachusetts, was excavated in 2005 by the University of Massachusetts Boston. Two years later, in 1808, the basement of the meeting house was designated for the education of Black children. It operated as a schoolhouse until 1834, when the Abiel Smith School was erected. The Antioch School and Church was excavated as part of The University of Texas Austin Anthropology field school in 2013. The Antioch School and Church opened in Antioch Colony in 1876 and was “relocated to the property right off the main road, Old Black Colony Road, to the colony” in the 1940s (Scott 2016: 43, 46). In 2007, Morganza Elementary School in Morganza, Pointe Coupe Parish, Louisiana was excavated by an archaeological field school spearheaded by Louisiana State University. Morganza was built in 1919 and abandoned in the 1970s due to the efforts to desegregate schools in the region (Struchtemeyer 2008:2).

To compare these sites, their glass vessel assemblage data were placed in functional categories: beverages, education, toiletries, food, health/medicine, and unidentified (Table 8).

The purpose of this comparison is to track the frequencies of these artifact types to indicate possible trends in schoolhouse glass assemblages. Overall, beverages have an overwhelming presence, while educational materials (e.g., ink wells, ink bottles) and toiletries (e.g., perfume, colognes, Vaseline, cold cream, and Talcollete) are represented at lower rates at all four sites.

**Table 8.** Glass vessels recovered from each site.

	<i>Abiel Smith School</i>		<i>African Meeting House</i>		<i>Antioch Colony School and Church</i>		<i>Morganza Elementary</i>	
<i>Object Function</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Beverage</i>	63	31.5	40	34.2	2*	5.1	20*	36.4
<i>Education</i>	15	7.5	0*	0.0	1	2.6	1	1.8
<i>Toiletries</i>	5	2.5	8	6.8	1	2.6	6	10.9
<i>Health/Medicine</i>	60	30	38	32.5	1	2.6	11	20.0
<i>Food</i>	4	2	12	10.3	34	87.2	17	30.9
<i>Unidentified</i>	53	26.5	19	16.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Reflects only the items that were discussed in the literature, as it was unclear how many beverage bottles were excavated.

Table 9 reflects the class of the beverage glass bottles (e.g., alcoholic and non-alcoholic) at each site. However, due to the unavailability of some data, not all categories in the table below are complete. The African Meeting House beverage assemblage was unable to be placed in object types because the information was not available. Morganza Elementary



had various types of wine bottles present in its assemblage, yet they were not counted and, therefore, not illustrated in the chart.

**Table 9.** Frequency of Beverage artifacts recovered from each site.

<i>Object Type</i>	<i>Abiel Smith School</i>		<i>African Meeting House</i>		<i>Antioch School and Church</i>		<i>Morganza Elementary</i>	
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<i><b>Alcoholic</b></i>								
<i>Liquor</i>	23	36.5	-	-	0	0.0	9	45.0
<i>Wine</i>	16	25.4	-	-	0	0.0	-	-
<i>Beer</i>	7	11.1	-	-	0	0.0	2	10.0
<i>Champagne</i>	3	4.8	-	-	0	0.0	0	0.0
<i><b>Non-Alcoholic</b></i>								
<i>Soda</i>	12	19.0	-	-	1	50.0	8	40.0
<i>Milk</i>	1	3.2	-	-	0	0.0	0	0.0
<i>Other</i>	0	0.0	-	-	1	50.0	1	5.0
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2*</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Reflects only the items that were discussed in the literature, as it was unclear how many beverage bottles were excavated.

With the representative data, alcohol was the most common beverage in the assemblage at the Abiel Smith School and Morganza Elementary. The Abiel Smith School alcoholic bottles show that liquor bottles (36.5%) are overwhelmingly represented, followed by wine (25.4%), and beer (11.1%) with champagne (4.8%) appearing at a lower rate. Similarly, Morganza Elementary displays a similar pattern with liquor (45%) having the

highest frequency and beer (10%) appearing at a lower rate. The Antioch Colony School and Church had no alcoholic related substances in its assemblage. Landon and Bulger (2013) document the presence of alcoholic bottles in the African Meeting House assemblage, albeit a small representative sample and not divided into the various kinds of alcohol (Landon and Bulger 2013).

For non-alcoholic beverages, soda appears to be a popular beverage choice at the Abiel Smith School, the Antioch Colony School and Church, and Morganza Elementary. The Abiel Smith School had slightly more soda bottles (19.0%) than the Antioch Colony School and Church (50%) and Morganza Elementary (40%). However, Morganza Elementary had a variety of distinguishable soda bottles such as three Root Beer bottles, two 7-Ups, and three Dr. Peppers. The presence of these beverage bottles coupled with the alcoholic bottles at the Abiel Smith School and Morganza Elementary could be indicative of community gathering events, especially, since this type of schoolhouse material culture is largely representative of community activities. The lack of alcohol bottles in the African Meeting House assemblage and the Antioch Colony School and Church is expected considering churches or spaces that function as places of worships have an etiquette and sobriety protocols are followed by members participating in religious practices. Many members of the African Meeting House also followed temperance rules, which may also explain the lack of alcohol bottles. It can be inferred that the presence of alcoholic bottles at school sites, like the Smith School and Morganza Elementary, are a product of members from the local Black communities who were participating in community activities, but perhaps were not members of the church.

**Table 10.** Frequency of Education artifacts recovered from each site.

	<i>Abiel Smith School</i>		<i>African Meeting House</i>		<i>Antioch School and Church</i>		<i>Morganza Elementary</i>	
<i>Object Type</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Educational</i>								
<i>Ink Well</i>	9	60.0	0*	0.0	0	0	1	100.0
<i>Ink Bottle</i>	6	40.0	0*	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 10 summarized the glass artifacts categorized as educational each site. The Abiel Smith School also has a larger educational assemblage. Both ink wells (60%) and ink bottles (40%) are present at Abiel Smith School. The Antioch School and Church is represented by one educational item type, ink bottle (100%). Similarly, Morganza Elementary is represented by one type, ink well (100%). Although, the African Meeting does not have any educational items in its glass assemblage, it is possible that these items may have been classified in another object type category by Dujnic (2005, 2007). The presence of the ink bottles and the ink wells at these school sites emphasizes the importance of writing. Alternatively, the lack thereof may also allude to the nature of the schools. The low frequencies of educational vessels at the Antioch Colony School and Church and Morganza Elementary may be due, in part, to the fact that the two schools are industrial arts schools and hands-on activities were performed more often than the ink and paper related activities. Additionally, it could indicate the lack of material goods for students. Although, the Smith School has the largest sample of educational items, the school was not granted a lot of

funding to supply students with fundamental learning utensils. Therefore, the Smith School education assemblage may speak to the scarcity of these items on the site.

**Table 11.** Frequency of Toiletries artifacts recovered from each site.

	<i>Abiel Smith School</i>		<i>African Meeting House</i>		<i>Antioch Colony School and Church</i>		<i>Morganza Elementary</i>	
<i>Object Type</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Toiletries</i>								
<i>Perfume / Cologne</i>	4	80.0	-	-	0	0.0	0	0.0
<i>Hair Tonic</i>	1	20.0	-	-	0	0.0	0	0.0
<i>Vaseline</i>	0	0.0	-	-	1	100.0	3	50.0
<i>Cold Cream</i>	0	0.0	-	-	0	0.0	2	33.3
<i>Talcollete</i>	0	0.0	-	-	0	0.0	1	12.5
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 11 shows the various types of toiletry glass artifacts at each site. The African Meeting House has the largest representative sample of toiletries (n=8), but due to the unavailability of some data, only the total toiletry vessels in the assemblage are known. Morganza Elementary has the second largest sample of toiletries (n=6) with the most variety with Vaseline (50%), cold cream (33.3%), and Talcollete (12.5%). The Abiel Smith School has the third largest toiletry sample with four perfume/cologne. The Antioch Colony School

and Church has the least number of toiletries represented by one Vaseline bottle. Overall, compared to the beverages and health/medicine bottles at each site, toiletries do not have a significant presence at any of the school sites (Table 8). However, their presence does suggest that they were brought to the site and used in or nearby the schoolhouse and were intentionally disposed in the Smith School privy. Additionally, the presence of toiletry items speaks to the Black community's ideologies of "the uplift and the construction of a respectable and moral African American community image" during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Dujnic 2007:103). Therefore, this idea would have included hygienic practices such as the application of perfumes/colognes and cosmetics and the use of hair tonics.

**Table 12.** Frequency of Health/Medicine artifacts recovered from each site.

	<i>Abiel Smith School</i>		<i>African Meeting House</i>		<i>Antioch Colony School and Church</i>		<i>Morganza Elementary</i>	
<i>Object Type</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Health/Medicine</i>								
<i>Druggist / Prescription</i>	23	38.3	26	68.4	0	0.0	5	45.5
<i>Patent / Proprietary</i>	23	38.3	5	13.2	0	0.0	6	54.5
<i>Indeterminate</i>	14	23.3	7	18.4	1	100.0	0	0.0
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 12 shows the frequency of Health/Medicine artifacts at each site. The Abiel Smith School (n=60) and the African Meeting House (n=38) have an overwhelming amount of Health/Medicine bottles compared to the Antioch Colony School and Church (n=1) and Morganza Elementary (n=11). There is no historic documentation that the Abiel Smith School was administering medicine, but the even distribution between Druggist/Prescription bottles (n=23) and Patent/Proprietary (n=23) suggest that there may be evidence that the school participated in medicinal practices. The African Meeting House has a high frequency of Druggist/Prescription (n=26) and a low frequency of Patent/Proprietary bottles (n=5). Although the health/medicine assemblage may seem large (n=38), it does not support the narrative that the meeting house was a health care provider to the African American community on Beacon Hill. Instead, Dujnic (2005:89) suggests the health/medicine assemblage at the African Meeting House is connected to individual choices of people living and visiting the meeting house, rather than the meeting house distributing medicine to the community. Additionally, no overwhelming number of medicinal bottles point to the distribution of medicine in comparison to the Wayman A.M.E. church in Bloomington, Illinois where 447 prescription bottles were recovered (Cabak et al. 1995).

The Morganza Elementary health/medicine assemblage is largely representative of Patent/Proprietary bottles (n=6) such as Dr. Tichenor, Musterole Cleveland, Vicks, Miles Laboratories, and Mrs. Stewart's Bluing. The patterns of health/medicine assemblage at Morganza Elementary suggests ethnomedicinal practices instead of a primarily orthodox medicine. Although, the bottles present in the assemblage are brand names and have a

conventional use marketed by a manufacturer, they are also products documented for ethnomedicinal use by African Americans (Struchtmeyer 2008:72). Ethnomedicinal practices were common among African American communities. These medicines attest to the preparedness of the teachers to administer medicine to those children who attended school despite being sick (Struchtmeyer 2008:76). The Antioch Colony School and Church has the lowest frequency of health/medicine bottles ( $n = 1$ ), and its type cannot be distinguished between Druggist/Prescription and Patent/Proprietary.

Table 13 display glass artifact frequencies for food-related items. The Abiel Smith School has the lowest frequency of food related items ( $n=4$ ). The African Meeting House ( $n=38$ ) and the Antioch Colony School and Church ( $n=34$ ) have the largest assemblage of food related items, although the specific object types could not be parsed out. The Antioch Colony School and Church food related assemblages were lumped into the “other” category because the glass vessels include items such as jars and bottles used for jarring and canning. Morganza Elementary would has the third largest food assemblage ( $n=17$ ) with a great variety within the assemblage, such as mayo, VA Daring Spices, McCormick and Baltimore, mustard, jelly jars, and roux bottles. The “other” category is for jar items such as mason jars and storage jars ( $n=4$ ).

**Table 13.** Frequency of Food-Related artifacts recovered from each site.

	<i>Abiel Smith School</i>		<i>African Meeting House</i>		<i>Antioch School and Church</i>		<i>Morganza Elementary</i>	
<i>Object Type</i>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><i>Food</i></b>								
<i>Condiment/Sauce</i>	4	100.0	-	-	0	0.0	11	64.7
<i>Spices</i>	0	0.0	-	-	0	0.0	2	11.8
<i>Other</i>	0	0.0	-	-	34	100.0	4	23.5
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Food related items at the African Meeting House are attributed to Domingo Williams, an African American caterer who occupied the basement apartment of the African Meeting House, and the community functions held there (Dujnic 2007:94; Landon and Bulger 2013). Antioch Colony School and Church food related items are argued to be pedagogical materials used for hands-on instruction to teach student industrial arts such as canning and jarring (Scott 2016:123). Similarly to Antioch Colony School and Church, Morganza Elementary food related items could be related to the training program for girls in domestic skills (Struchtmeyer 2008:60). Alternatively, it is possible that members of the community brought food for students in jars (Struchtmeyer 2008:98). Considering that the African Meeting House had a caterer on site and both the Antioch Colony School and Church and Morganza Elementary were industrial schools, it is not surprising that the Abiel Smith School food related vessels are scant. The lack of food related items recovered at the Smith School



suggest not much food preparation or consumption at the site. Unlike the neighboring African Meeting House, the Smith School did not have a kitchen. Additionally, it was not common practice during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for students to bring their lunches to school; either students went home during lunch and ate or they went to local restaurants, as is the case at Morganza Elementary (Struchtmeyer 2008:97).

Overall, vessel assemblages at all four African American schools are similar. Educational related materials occur in low quantities. The minimal amount of educational related materials, which is overwhelmingly represented by ink wells and bottles, suggests that some amount of writing was completed at the school sites, but it was not the main focus of some of the educational programs. The educational related materials also emphasizes the transportation of school materials between home and school. Domestic artifacts such as beverages and food-related assemblages illuminate the various activities that took place at the school such as drinking, food preparation, food consumption, industrial arts programming, and community gatherings. The nature of the health/medicine bottles captures African Americans attitudes towards health practices. Although the types of medicines vary, their use reflects African Americans participation in mainstream medicinal practices as well as the use of mainstream medicines incorporated into traditional ethnomedicinal practices. In large, the presence of medicinal bottles at educational institutions details the occurrence of medicinal use whether it be administered or used individually. The next chapter will discuss the dual functions of Black social institutions such as schools in order to understand the Smith School's role in the health practices of Black Bostonians.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Scholars have noted that social institutions are sites of community-based activities as well as reflections of the ideals and values of people in a community (Beisaw & Baxter 2009). Historians and archaeologists alike have stressed how Black social institutions are formed out of conditions of racial exclusion. Yet, they are also integral in helping Black communities combat racism through community activities centered on the ideas of racial uplift. In archaeology, most studies on Black social institutions focus largely on churches and meeting houses. The research described herein broadens our understanding of Black social institutions by focusing on school sites and their roles in Black communities. The archaeology at the Abiel Smith School supports the claim that schools are sites of diverse community-based activities. The analysis conducted on the glass assemblage supports varied activities at these community sites in the areas of education, health, and recreation.

#### **Education**

The glass vessels related to education and other artifacts related to schooling such as ink pot desk inserts, slate boards, and slate pencils suggests that the teaching and training of African American students on Beacon Hill was a key activity occurring at the Abiel Smith School. The educational related items may have been procured for the Smith School by

donation or from the school committee. Although there is no record of writing implements being purchased for the Smith School, a receipt from 1839, lists that 2000 quills were purchased for the school along with 110 writing books (City of Boston 1839).

Table 13 shows the frequency of varied educational related objects in the Smith School's archaeological assemblage dating from circa 1849-1880. While most of the artifacts were glass ink pots, wells, or bottles, the presence of slate boards and pencils in the assemblage suggests an emphasis on writing during the segregation of the Smith School and the integration of the Smith School in 1855.

**Table 14.** Education Based artifacts from Smith School.

OBJECT TYPE	COUNT
INK WELL	9
INK BOTTLE	6
INK POTS	26
SLATE BOARD	4
SLATE PENCILS	8

Although housed in a substandard facility, the Smith School had a standardized curriculum. Smith School students were offered the same set of core instruction as white students in spelling, reading, grammar, geography, writing, arithmetic, and book-keeping (City Document 1838:8; Yocum 1998:15-16). In addition to those subjects, the curriculum at white schools offered instruction in composition, declamation, history, algebra, natural philosophy, natural history, drawing, and Latin (Forbes 1842; White 1971:142-143). While

white students were being offered fifteen subjects, Black students were being offered eight subjects. The quality of the Smith School education seldom produced students qualified for admission to high school.

However, despite the inferiority of the Smith School's education, the nature of the education-related artifacts at the Smith School emphasizes the importance of writing. Education-related objects oftentimes have low visibility archaeologically, making the importance of education easy to overlook. When an action as simple as a student learning can challenge the idea of racial hierarchies, the low visibility of educational items does not mean that education was not a central activity. Rather it should be interpreted as evidence of underfunding caused by racial discrimination. Such is the case of the Smith School. The more durable nature of the slate suggests fewer of them would be discarded, because they would have been reused until they broke. But the great quantity of ink bottles and wells reflect the school's curriculum and dedication to the literacy of their students. Members in the Black community viewed literacy as an important skillset because it would have allowed African Americans to excel alongside their white counterparts, achieve economic independence, and acts as a useful tool for combatting racism (Scott 2016:113). Members of the Beacon Hill community hoped that the literacy of their children would be integral in denouncing white rhetoric that Black people were a race inferior in intelligence and to strengthen their claim to American citizenship. Therefore, writing implements at the Smith School suggest an emphasis on a liberal arts-oriented education. Literacy had the potential to elevate Blacks socioeconomic status through more genteel career opportunities, as opposed to providing training for jobs in lower paying trades.

## **Health Care**

Little archaeological evidence of African American institutions administering medicine to the Black community has been recovered. Cabak et al. (1995), however, is one case study that has found evidence of a Black social institution, the Wayman A.M.E Church, functioning as a health care provider in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries due to 584 medicinal bottles being present at the site. The archaeology of the Abiel Smith School also suggests that the spaces in which Blacks practiced medicine were not limited to the home. To understand the role the Smith School played in treating the health needs of the Black community members, we first need to understand the physical environment of African Americans on Beacon Hill.

The North Slope of Beacon Hill was a densely populated area that was unfavorable to the physical comfort of Black Bostonians (White 1971:28). Dr. Jeremy Belknap noted in 1790, that the African Americans on Beacon Hill “often suffered in damp, unwholesome lodgings” (Belknap 1847:206). Additionally, many Black households were overcrowded because they opened their homes to boarders, which included “unrelated individuals or families and adult members of the extended family, and...new arrivals seeking employment” (Hayden 2007:132). Living conditions on Beacon Hill made them susceptible to many infirmities, diseases, and epidemics such as cholera, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and yellow fever. Many African American children were faced with homelessness as well. Poverty was not necessarily the leading cause for making the Black community a vulnerable population to illness, but the limited medical support and the exclusion from public health institutions

exacerbated the decline of Black health. In 1850, the African American community on Beacon Hill had one known physician per 1,000 people (White 1971:68).

Similar to Black households, the Smith School did not go without its physical challenges. In 1846, Ambrose Wellington, reported to the visiting school committee that the schoolrooms were too small, and the paint was evidence of negligence and abuse (City of Boston 1846:51; White 1971:159). A year later in 1847, Charles Brook, a school committee member reported that, “the yard... [was] bounded on one side by the out houses and favoured [sic] on the other by a pump in questionable proximity. The only way through these conveniences is through a dark and damp cellar” (Records of the Boston School Committee 1847:112-113). Thus, the Smith School appeared “unclassic and presents as little cheerfulness and comfort” (Records of the School Committee 1847:112-113).

These poor schooling conditions seemingly impacted African American students’ health and their ability to learn, which in turn affected their attendance. Certainly, African American children’s health would have impacted their attendance at the Smith School. Attendance in 1841 decreased due to illness (White 1971:114). A smallpox epidemic broke out in the neighborhood on November 10, 1854, that prevented Black children from attending school. Out of the eighty pupils that attended the Smith School, only thirty-four attended school that day (The Liberator 1854). Absentees distressed the school committee, which often complained about the attendance of the African American students. Therefore, offering health care aid to African American students at the Abiel Smith School would have been an attempt to improve the physical well-being of these children as well as the

attendance. In doing so the school committee would have appeared to be sensitive to the Black community's needs, all while dodging the issue of an equal school facility and/or desegregation in order to placate the grievances of the Black parents on Beacon Hill (Jones 2004:269). Shocked by the conditions of the African American children, visiting school committee members would recurrently donate money, books, papers, clothing, shoes, and stationery (White 1971:114). The same visiting school committee members may have provided the African American children with medicine. Teachers may have also purchased medicine for the children who attended the Smith School. After all, teachers "frequently notified the city of the results of poverty" that children were facing on Beacon Hill (White 1971:114). The historical record does illustrate that those invested in African American children's well-being and education fought to improve their conditions, especially when public aid was non-existent for Black Bostonians.

The presence of health and medicine artifacts at the Smith School further suggests that the Smith School may have played a role in treating the health needs of the Black community from circa 1849 to 1880. The fact that several of the medicinal bottles date to after the integration of the Smith School indicates that this practice continued with white students. After integration, the students most likely to have attended the Smith School came from the nearest neighborhoods, many of which were populated by poor, white immigrants. These immigrants would also have lived in close quarters and experienced a lack of hygiene or healthcare, and thus may have relied on the Smith School to provide some healthcare. Many of the patent/proprietary bottles were advertised as cure-all medicines. Given the range

and the nature of the medicinal bottles at the Smith School it appears that many of medicines sought to treat the symptoms of the epidemics that confronted the Black community, and also nearby immigrant communities in the West End neighborhood. Therefore, they would have been able to treat variety of symptoms such as vomiting, abdominal and muscle pain, coughs, and other ailments. There are four advertised children's medicinal bottles: three "Dr. McMunn's Elixir of Opium" and one "MS. WINSLOW'S/ SOOTHING SYRUP/ PROPIETOR'S CURTIS & PERKINS." Dr. McMunn's Elixir of Opium was introduced to the United States circa 1842 and continued production until 1900. According to the testimonials reported in 1846, Dr. McMunn's elixir treats nervous irritability, vomiting, whooping-cough, and spasmodic diseases (e.g., tetanus, epilepsy, hysteria, tic douloureux, convulsions, and hydrophobia) (McMunn 1840). Mrs. Winslow Soothing Syrup was first distributed in the mid-1840s and continued to be produced until the 1930s even though the medicine was denounced in 1911 by the American Medical Association (Snyder 1905). The two primary ingredients of the syrup were morphine and alcohol, and it was advertised to remedy infant's "teething sickness." Additionally, the syrup allayed pain, cured winds and colic, and was considered the best remedy for diarrhea (Snyder 1905:117). These cure all medicines could have been administered to the children attending the Smith School to aid in their general well-being or to specifically combat crowd diseases within the community.

Although not advertised as children's medicine, the collection contains one "Perry Davis' Vegetable Pain Killer" and two Drake's 1860 Plantation Bitters Bottle. Perry Davis' Vegetable Pain Killer was introduced in 1840 and was one of the first nationally advertised



remedies specifically for pain and was sold for more than 60 years (Petty 2019: 264, 268). The Plantation Bitters Bottle was patented in 1862 and was produced until circa 1884 (Fike 1987:33). The Bitters bottle was labeled as, “an effectual tonic, appetizer, and stimulant; imparting tone to the stomach and strength to the stomach” (Fike 1987:33). The contents of the bottle included St. Croix rum from the Caribbean, calisaya bark roots, and herbs (Fike 1987:33). These medicines would have been administered to children to possibly aid in curing symptoms of pain (Petty 2019:266).

The druggist/prescription bottles uncovered at the Abiel Smith School speak to a more professional practice of medicine. Three bottles bear the imprint of local distributors: (1) “Boston/Leavitt;” (2) “Genuine/ J Russell Spalding/ Boston, Mass.,” and (3) “Boston/ Preston & Merrill.” The “Boston/Leavitt” bottle contents may be associated with J. L. Leavitt who produced bitters, castor oil, and medicine from 1846 to 1860. The “Genuine/ J Russell Spalding/ Boston, Mass.” is a rosemary and castor oil bottle was produced in the 1850s and sold in an apothecary located on 27 Tremont Street. The bottle would have had a paper label that provided directions on application. This bottle directs the user to: “apply [topically] every morning, with a soft oil brush... [on] hair.” However, within African American culture, Castor oil has an alternate use and can be used orally to treat illness such as stomach ailments (Savitt 1978; Wilkie 2000). The “Boston/ Preston & Merrill” bottle contents were produced by a chemist firm, which operated in Boston from 1845 to ca. 1906 (Fike 1987:178). Products include rose water, lemon and yeast powders, and flavoring extracts. There are also two druggist packing bottles. These bottles would have been purchased in bulk

by a medical professional such as a pharmacist or a hospital to dispense prescriptions (Herkovitz 1978:17; Cabak et al. 1995:66). The two vials are likely to have been “obtained through consultation with a ‘regular’ physician or apothecary” (Dujnic 2005:88). Lastly, the two prescription bottles with sponges in them indicate that there may have been some inhalation of ether or chloroform vapors (Costello 2018). The sponge in the bottle would have been the unconventional and possibly the inexpensive and accessible way to deliver the medicine to a patient. Ether or chloroform in the nineteenth century was typically dispensed from an elaborate inhaler (Costello 2018). Furthermore, before ether was used in surgery, it was known as a “potent pain reliever,” and prescribed for colic, diarrhea, cramps, dizziness, cholera, and fainting. Ether could also relieve asthma symptoms (Egglston 2014; Costello 2018). Therefore, like much of the medicine in the assemblage, these medicines would be administered to children to aid in symptoms caused by poor urban living.

Although the historical record does not mention health care practices at the Smith School, the presence of the medicinal bottles demonstrates that the bottles were intentionally discarded in the privy, which may suggest that the students of the school, and perhaps the teachers, were administering medicine. The presence of these medicinal bottles not only provides insight on the African American community’s views on health, but it is also a “testament to the duties of teachers within the school” (Struchtmeyer 2008:76). During this period, African American schools were a safe space, and ultimately, the only place that a child can go when their parents were working. Thus, it is possible that students were

routinely sent to school sick (Struchtmeyer 2008:76), further supporting the possibility that the teachers at the Smith School were prepared to combat sickness.

The teachers at the Smith School valued cleanliness and ordering of the physical environment (Towle 1991:6; Pendery 1997:5). It is reported that one of the duties for schoolteachers in Boston was to keep the yards and the outbuildings of schools clean and in good condition (Andrews 1998:23). Ironically, their efforts may have had the opposite effect. By concentrating garbage and food remains in one place, the privy, they may have instead attracted the very vermin they sought to eliminate (Andrews 1998:23). This infestation of rodents would pass along diseases since rats and their fleas are known to transmit and spread the plague, murine typhus, rickettsial pox, and trichina worms (Andrews 1998:23). Therefore, it is possible that the teachers' intentions to keep the yard space clean and orderly may have attracted rats and disease (Andrews 1998:23). Even so, there is evidence for attempts at cleanliness and order alongside medicinal care at the Smith School, suggesting that teachers valued the health of their students.

If the Smith School extended its role to meet the health needs of the African American children on Beacon Hill, then it acknowledged that health and education were synonymous. To be active members in society the children attending the Smith School would have had to maintain good health because "good health is the basis for wealth, happiness, and long life" (Allensworth et al. 1995:1). Therefore, administering medicine to the African American children and keeping them in good health not only fueled them with knowledge, but it allowed them the ability to overcome oppression, and combat racism.

## **Recreation**

The North Slope of Beacon Hill served a densely populated Black community and would have been a high traffic area full of diverse activities. The frequent use of this space allowed it to accumulate many discarded materials. For example, sixty-seven alcohol-substance related beverage bottles were found in the Smith School yard and the easement between the Smith School and African Meeting House. The Smith School served as a focal point for Black parents and community members “who had little to no involvement in the city’s black churches,” but wanted to be active members of the Black community (Hancock 1999:123).

Although it is unclear what types of activities took place at the Smith School, some of the medicine bottles may have also been connected to community health, rather than student specific (as part of the use of space by community at large). Additionally, the beverage bottle assemblage does reflect some recreational activities such as concerts that took place on campus and may suggest that the school had more lax rules around etiquette and sobriety. This contrasts with the stricter rules of the African Meeting House, likely because it was managed by other people and entities besides the key Black leaders and figures in the Beacon Hill community.

## **Implications**

The Abiel Smith School and the African Meeting House offer two tangible markers of Black presence in Boston, Massachusetts. There has been extensive discussion around the role that the African Meeting House played in the Black community on Beacon Hill, but

limited discussion has been dedicated to the Abiel Smith School and what it may have been like for nineteenth-century Black students. As a result, the interpretation of African American life on Beacon Hill remains limited because the Abiel Smith School is not included in the narrative. Considering that both the African Meeting House and the Smith School were vital institutions in the Black community, the archaeology calls for the National Park Service to highlight the role of the school more in its interpretation. The Black Boston narrative largely focuses on racial uplift. Central to this narrative is the African Meeting House, which would have spearheaded how Blacks obtained upward mobility by adhering to temperance rules to gain respect in “White” America. However, the Abiel Smith School can expand this narrative of racial uplift by focusing on how Black children were linked to the fight for equality through obtaining an education to learn how to negotiate racism.

William C. Nell and Thomas Paul represent two graduates of the Smith School who are also products of the effectiveness of Black education. Although they had seemingly different ideas of what equal school rights looked like, both men went on to become active members in the Black community in Beacon Hill fighting for equal school rights for Black children. William C. Nell was an integrationist, believing that integration would, “secure the opportunity for [Black] children to be educated on the same terms as white children so they would have a chance to overcome oppression” (Hancock 1999:123). Contrarily, Thomas Paul was a separatist. He believed a separate educational institution gave Blacks “the right to protect [their] space and pursue their own interests” (Hancock 1999:123). Despite the unequal educational nature compared to white education, the Smith School provided the two

men with two different approaches for Blacks to obtain upward mobility. William C. Nell was integral in the abolishment of the Smith School, which rescinded Thomas Paul's efforts to fill the Abiel Smith School with an African American headmaster and African American teachers to improve the learning conditions of the Black children and ensure they were being properly supported. Had the two men not attended the Smith School, which would have given them the essentials to seek knowledge in order to improve their condition, it is possible that they may have not been able to be leaders of the Black community, enter the body politic, or advocate for equal rights.

The Smith School's glass assemblage offers us an illustration of community decision making and diverse communal activities. The Black community's ability to express their grievances and advocate for their children through the operation of the Smith School created an archaeological footprint that depicts how African Americans resisted racism. Black education was central to helping African Americans mitigate the impacts racism and advance in society, but to do so, it required African Americans to be healthy, even in the wake of gross disparities, which is why the medicinal related objects at the Smith School are significant to our understanding of the role Black social institutions played in the Black community. As previously stated, education and health are synonymous, and to be able to obtain and/or maintain both grants you the ability to prosper and participate in society. White Bostonians' disdain of African Americans created further attempts to block Blacks people's upward mobility and their claim to citizenship by excluding them from public institutions and providing them with an unequal education. This, in turn, caused Black Bostonians to turn

inwardly and look to their own institutions for support. Therefore, the medicinal related objects recovered from the Smith School site reveal more about the African American community on Beacon Hill than just educational practices. When viewed as a microcosm of the community, the Smith School provides insight into how Black Bostonians were circumventing the racist practices that denied them access to not only quality education, but also quality medical care. It offers an example of the determination and ingenuity of this community and their dedication to creating better lives for their children.

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